

New Bullards Bar Dam Secondary Spillway Project

The Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA), as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), publicly announces its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the construction, operation and maintenance of the New Bullards Bar Dam Secondary Spillway Project (project or proposed project). In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines, 14 CCR Section 15000 et seq., YCWA is requesting written comments from public agencies, stakeholders, and interested organizations and individuals on the scope and content of environmental information that should be addressed in the EIR, and suggested alternatives to the proposed project that may be considered in the EIR.

CEQA specifies that a public agency must prepare an EIR on any project that it proposes to carry out or approve that may have a potentially significant or significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on the physical environment. YCWA is proposing to construct and operate a secondary spillway to improve flood management in the Yuba-Feather River systems and provide public safety benefits, by reducing flood risk and increasing operational flexibility for managing outflow at New Bullards Bar Dam (Dam). YCWA has determined that constructing and operating the proposed project may result in potentially significant and significant effects on the physical environment. Therefore, YCWA will prepare a project-level EIR that evaluates the potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed project.

Project Location

The project site is located 35 miles northeast of the City of Marysville, near the intersection of Marysville Road and County Road 169 in unincorporated Yuba County, California (**Figure 1**). The Secondary Spillway is proposed at the left abutment of the Dam adjacent to the Primary Spillway. Marysville Road crosses the Dam and passes through the project site.

Project Description

New Bullards Bar Reservoir (Reservoir) and Dam is the primary facility of the multipurpose Yuba River Development Project (YRDP). The YRDP is a hydroelectric project that operates pursuant to a license issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). In 2014, YCWA filed an application for a new/extended license with FERC. FERC is reviewing and considering that license application and in 2019 FERC approved a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the license application under the National Environmental Policy Act. FERC now is undertaking consultation with federal fish and wildlife agencies under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Reservoir and Dam is located on the North Yuba River but also receives water diverted from Oregon Creek (via the Camptonville Tunnel originating near the Log Cabin Diversion Dam) and the Middle Fork Yuba River (via the Lohman Ridge Tunnel originating near Our House Diversion Dam, which flows to Oregon Creek for further diversion to the Reservoir). The Reservoir and Dam is operated by YCWA, which follows United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) flood rules that dictate the amount of seasonal flood space that must be

maintained in the Reservoir (i.e., Master Manual of Reservoir Regulation, Sacramento River Basin, California, and specifically the New Bullards Bar Reservoir Flood Control Manual (the Manual)).

The Yuba-Feather River system has a long history of catastrophic flood events. To better manage future floods and provide public safety benefits, the proposed Secondary Spillway would allow for releases from the Dam at a lower Reservoir water elevation than is currently provided from the Primary Spillway. Releases from the Secondary Spillway would be made in anticipation of large storms to provide increased capacity in the Reservoir during high-precipitation events. The Secondary Spillway would have a discharge capacity of 35,000 cubic-feet-per second and operate conjunctively with the Primary Spillway and New Colgate Powerhouse to meet the Dam's overall target releases. The primary benefit of the proposed project is operational flexibility for managing flood-related outflow at the Dam, which would significantly reduce flood stage downstream at Marysville and the Feather-Yuba River confluence.

The Secondary Spillway may be used during small- and medium-sized flood events to maintain the designated flood space as well as during larger floods to evacuate a portion of the conservation storage (i.e., reservoir storage space below USACE-mandated flood space) to manage flood flows. During smaller flood events, flood releases may be made using only the Primary Spillway or only the Secondary Spillway. The proposed project does not include any changes to the existing New Bullards Bar Reservoir Flood Control Manual; the new Secondary Spillway would be operated under the existing Manual's requirements to meet project objectives. However, YCWA expects that the USACE will update and amend the Manual following construction of the Secondary Spillway.

The proposed project includes the following components (**Figure 2**):

- Design and construction of the following facilities:
 - An excavated approach channel in the Reservoir at the left Dam abutment to guide water into the Secondary Spillway.
 - A control structure with gates to control water releases from the approach channel.
 - An open-cut concrete-lined spillway chute with an outlet structure (flip bucket) designed to withstand the force of water as it exits the spillway chute.
 - An excavated discharge channel extending from the outlet structure down to the North Yuba River channel.
 - An operations platform and building to house equipment and monitoring systems for operating the Secondary Spillway.
 - Relocating the Dam Overlook Observation Site at the left abutment of the Dam.
 - Relocating a small segment of Marysville Road over the Secondary Spillway.

- Operation and maintenance of the Secondary Spillway and related facilities pursuant to the Manual and other applicable rules and guidelines.

Project construction would occur over approximately 3 years and is currently anticipated to begin in 2023. Soil and surplus rock resulting from excavation activities during construction would be permanently disposed of on YCWA-owned lands adjacent to the project site (**Figure 2**). Staging and additional construction areas would be located nearby the Secondary Spillway and soil and rock disposal area. Existing roads and temporary access routes would be used to access different portions of the project site and staging areas.

Issues to Be Addressed in the EIR

The EIR will address potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, including construction, operation, and maintenance and will propose feasible mitigation measures to address any potentially significant or significant impacts that are identified. Based on preliminary evaluations, the proposed project's probable environmental effects are as follows:

- **Aesthetics** – effects to the area's visual character and existing views including temporary and short-term changes from construction activities and permanent changes from the Secondary Spillway and soil and rock disposal on nearby lands.
- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources** – permanent effects related to conversion of forestlands from the Secondary Spillway and soil disposal on nearby lands.
- **Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy** – temporary and short-term increases in pollutant emissions and energy demand associated with project construction; increase in permanent energy use and associated emissions.
- **Biological Resources** – potential impacts to special-status or migratory species or their habitats from project construction or modified flood flows downstream; effects related to tree removal.
- **Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources** - potential disturbance or destruction of unknown historic, archaeological, or Tribal cultural resources during construction.
- **Geology and Soils** – potential increases in erosion during and after construction; potential disturbance or destruction of known or unknown paleontological resources during construction.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials** – potential accidental spills or exposure to hazardous materials during construction.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality** – potential transport of sediments and other pollutants into water courses; occasional temporary downstream changes to hydrology downstream in the North Yuba River from releasing water in the Secondary Spillway at lower reservoir elevations.
- **Noise** – temporary and short-term increases in noise and vibration levels near sensitive receptors and along haul routes during construction.

- **Recreation** – temporary and short-term disturbance of land- and water-based recreational activities and access in areas adjacent to the construction site; long-term impacts to the existing Dam Overlook Observation Site which requires relocation to accommodate project construction; temporary closure of parking areas and trailheads in the project vicinity.
- **Transportation** – temporary and short-term disruption of traffic circulation or emergency access during construction; potential disruption of service or delays in emergency response times during project construction on Marysville Road.
- **Public Services and Utilities and Service Systems** – potential disruption of service during construction; need for permanent relocation of utilities within the project construction area.

The EIR will also address cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, and other issues required by CEQA. The EIR will also examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project, including the CEQA-mandated No Project Alternative, and other potential alternatives that may avoid or substantially reduce any of the potentially significant effects of the project. The proposed project is subject to adjustment based on information gathered during the scoping and environmental review processes, as well as through the continuing refinement of the engineering design and construction planning.

The construction and operation of the project are evaluated in the 2019 FERC FEIS for the new license application and are expected to be authorized by and a condition of the new license to be issued by FERC. YCWA therefore expects and intends for the project construction and operation to be covered by the new FERC license, which FERC is expected to issue following completion of the pending ESA consultation. At this time, the precise timing of the new license issuance is uncertain. If the issuance of the new license is unexpectedly delayed due to the ESA consultation, YCWA may need to later request an amendment to the existing FERC license to authorize the project.

How to Comment

This Notice of Preparation is being circulated for a period of 30 days, **beginning November 10, 2020, and ending December 10, 2020**. Comments regarding the scope of the environmental analysis to be conducted for the proposed project may be submitted during this timeframe. When submitting a comment please ensure your email includes “New Bullards Bar Dam Secondary Spillway Project NOP Comments” in the subject line, and the name and mailing address of the commenter, agency, or organization in the body of the email. Additionally, agencies that will need to consider the EIR when deciding whether to issue permits or other approvals for the project should provide the name of a contact person. Comments may be submitted by mail or e-mail to the address below:

John James
Yuba County Water Agency
1220 F Street
Marysville, CA 95901
jjames@yubawater.org

All comments must be received by December 3, 2020. YCWA will also host a virtual scoping meeting from **4:00 pm to 6:00 pm on November 17, 2020, via zoom virtual meeting**, where interested persons may also submit verbal comments. Prior to the virtual scoping meeting, you can register to join the meeting at the following link: **<https://bit.ly/31Q5jsJ>**. After registration, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Figure 1. Project Location

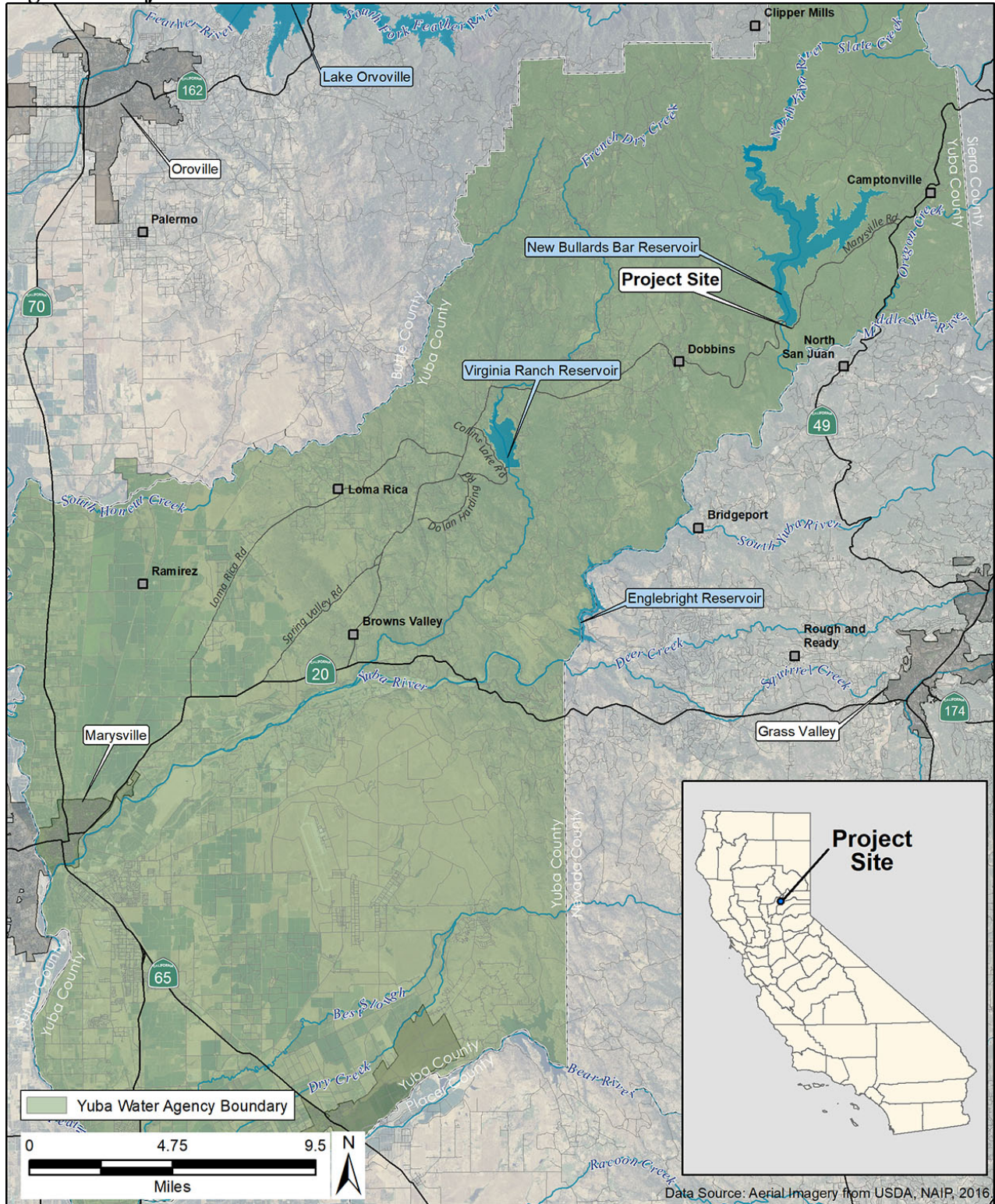


Figure Source: GEI Consultants, Inc. 2020.

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Figure 2. Project Site

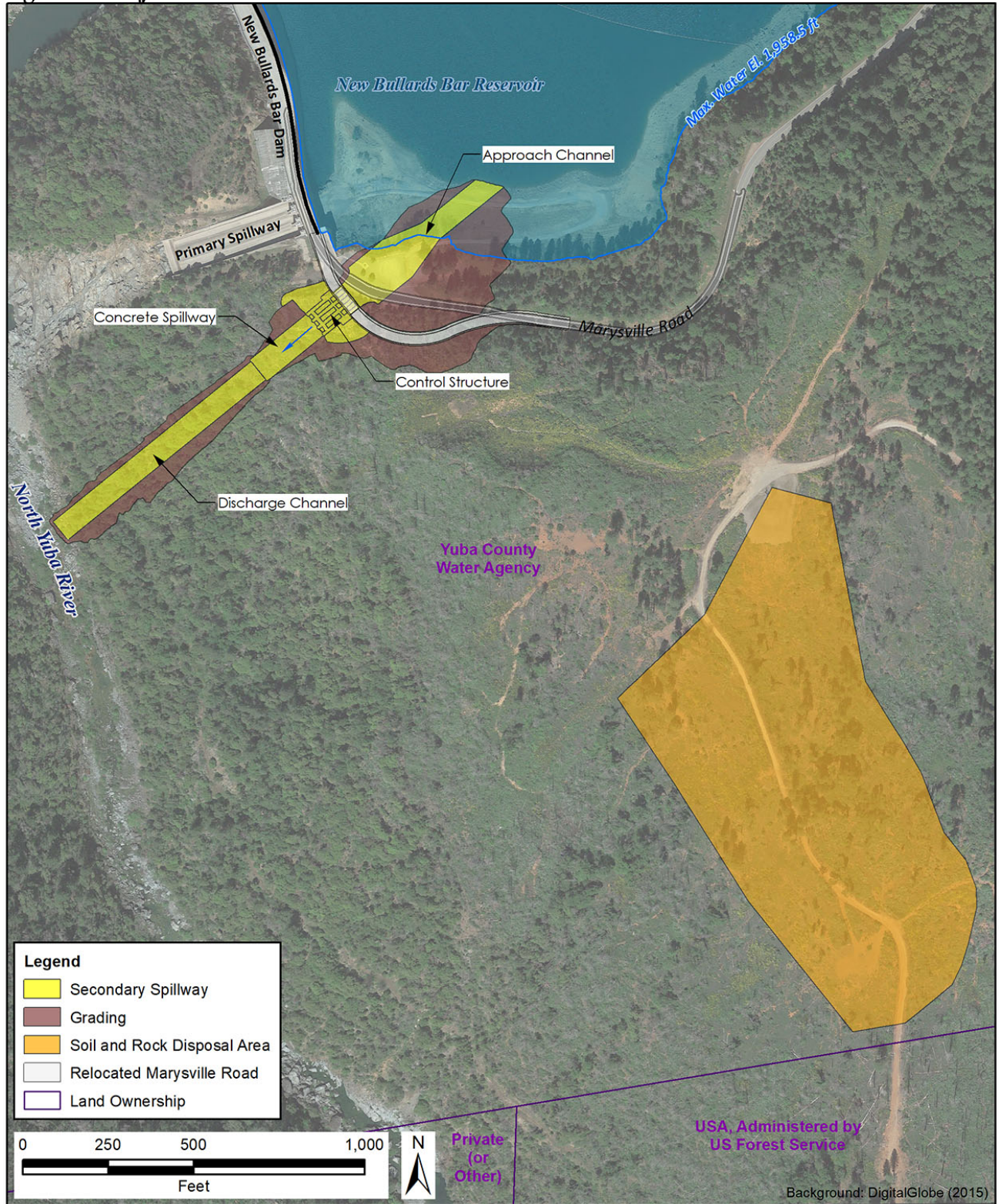


Figure Source: GEI Consultants, Inc.2020.

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