

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY**

**California Department of Water Resources Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report
for the Pulse Flows Component of the Water Storage Investment Program Groundwater Projects
Now Available for Public Review and Comment**

Date: February 16, 2024

To: Public Agencies, Interested Tribal Governments, and Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Availability of a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report

Project Title: Pulse Flows Component of the Water Storage Investment Program Groundwater Projects

Introduction

Notice is hereby given by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) that the Pulse Flows Component of the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP) Groundwater Projects (Pulse Flows Component) Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (Draft SEIR) is available for public review and comment. The Draft SEIR is a supplement to three certified environmental impact reports (EIRs) prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for three independent WSIP projects (referred to herein as the "WSIP Groundwater Projects"): (1) the Chino Basin Program, (2) the Kern Fan Groundwater Storage Project (Kern Fan), and (3) the Willow Springs Water Bank Project (Willow Springs). The Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA), the Authority for the Groundwater Banking Joint Powers Authority (JPA), and the Rosamond Community Services District (CSD) are the lead agencies pursuant to CEQA for these WSIP Groundwater Projects, respectively. DWR, as a responsible agency pursuant to CEQA, has prepared this Draft SEIR to supplement the three WSIP Groundwater Projects' EIRs and to provide CEQA coverage for DWR's actions. This Notice of Availability (NOA) has been prepared for the Pulse Flows Component Draft SEIR, in compliance with Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Description of the Pulse Flows Component

The Pulse Flows Component is defined by the following DWR actions:

- (1) Release of the pulse flows from Lake Oroville into the Low Flow Channel of the Feather River, with the goal of improving habitat conditions for listed salmonids, as well as improving spawning and migration conditions for other listed and non-listed native fish species.
- (2) Implementation of the WSIP Operational Exchange Process that develops water used for pulse flow releases.
- (3) Diversion and conveyance of water to Kern Fan and Willow Springs that would be stored, in part, for ecosystem benefit.

Implementation of the Pulse Flows Component would not require construction of any new facilities in addition to those previously analyzed in the three WSIP Groundwater Projects' EIRs. Existing facilities would be used, with operations modified to support the pulse flow releases.

The Pulse Flows Component study area analyzed in this Draft SEIR extends approximately 575 miles from Lake Oroville in Northern California to the WSIP Groundwater Projects in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California (**Figure 1**).

Anticipated Significant Environmental Effects

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2, this Draft SEIR identifies and focuses on the potentially significant direct and indirect environmental effects of the Pulse Flows Component. The Draft SEIR evaluates potential effects of the conservative pulse flow release scenario, defined as a maximum flow of 10,000 cubic feet per second (base flow plus pulse flow released into the Low Flow Channel of the Feather River) over a short duration (approximately five days) in the spring months (March, April, May or June) of critically dry or above normal water year types. The maximum pulse flow of 10,000 cfs is conservatively analyzed to occur about once in three years. Pulse flows of up to 100,000 acre-feet would be released from Lake Oroville with a ramp-down period estimated to occur over several days to several weeks, following regulated ramp-down rate of decrease requirements.

The Draft SEIR identifies less-than-significant impacts on hydrology and water quality, aquatic biological resources, terrestrial biological resources, cultural resources, energy and greenhouse gas emissions, recreation, geology and soils, and agriculture and forestry resources. The Draft SEIR identifies potentially significant impacts on tribal cultural resources that would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of mitigation measures.

Written Comments

This Draft SEIR is available to federal, State, and local agencies, interested organizations, and individuals who may want to review and comment on the analysis in this document. Publication of the Draft SEIR marks the beginning of a 45-day public review period. The 45-day public review period extends from February 16, 2024 through April 1, 2024, ending at 5:00 p.m. During the public comment period, written comments should be delivered to:

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P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

Email: PulseFlowsComponent@water.ca.gov

If comments are provided via email, please include the project title in the subject line, attach comments in Microsoft Word format if possible, and include the commenter's U.S. Postal Service mailing address.

PLEASE NOTE: All comments received will be made available for public review in their entirety in the Final SEIR, including the names and addresses of the respondents, unless individual commenters request that DWR withhold their name and/or home addresses, etc. If commenters wish for their names and/or home addresses to be withheld, this must be stated at the beginning of their comments.

This Draft SEIR is available for public review on the following websites via the following links:

DWR's public notices webpage:

<https://water.ca.gov/News/Public-Notices>

California State Clearinghouse CEQAnet Web Portal (search by project name or SCH No. 2022080216):

<https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/>

A physical copy of the Draft SEIR is also available for review during normal business hours at the following locations:

California Department of Water Resources
Division of Operations and Maintenance, Water Projects Planning and Management Branch
1516 9th Street, 2nd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sacramento Public Library, Central Branch
828 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Public Meeting

DWR will conduct a virtual public meeting via Zoom to receive oral comments on the adequacy of the analysis included in this Draft SEIR. The meeting will be held on:

Date: March 19, 2024

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Registration: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_yvnN3OOxTEqM_EIY1_ilJg

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. Registration will be open until the start of the meeting on March 19, 2024.

The public meeting will begin with a brief presentation and an opportunity for clarifying questions, followed by a public comment session. Comments should be focused on the analysis in the Draft SEIR. All substantive oral comments received during the meeting will be recorded as official public comments and responded to in the Final SEIR. Spanish language interpretation will be available. The meeting will be recorded, and the transcription will become part of the project's administrative record.

Attachment

Figure 1: Pulse Flows Component Study Area



SOURCE: Esri, 2022; ESA, 2023

Figure 1
Pulse Flows Component Study Area