

Draft EA Available for Conveyance of Refuge Water Supplies to the East Bear Creek Unit of the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Project

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The Bureau of Reclamation announces the availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for Conveyance of Refuge Water Supplies to the East Bear Creek Unit of the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Project (Project) for public review and comment. Reclamation is the lead Federal agency for the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Department of the Interior, through Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is required to provide firm water supplies of suitable quality to maintain and improve wetland habitat areas on units of the Wildlife Refuge System in California's Central Valley. Providing methods to facilitate the delivery of firm water supplies under this Project would allow for optimum habitat management on existing refuge lands in the East Bear Creek Unit. The specific purpose of the Project is to develop or improve the necessary water delivery facilities to enable reliable, year-round delivery of Level 4 water supplies of adequate quality to the East Bear Creek Unit to support habitat restoration.

The Draft EA considered a No Action Alternative and three action alternatives consisting of different pipeline alignments for conveying water to the East Bear Creek Unit. Alternative D, the modified west-side alignment, is Reclamation's preferred alternative and is considered the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative was not selected because it would not comply with Section 3406(d) of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act that specifies firm water supplies to the refuges, including the East Bear Creek Unit.

Reclamation intends to deliver surface water to the northern refuge boundary via Bear Creek and deliver water to the southern refuge boundary through diversion from the Island C Canal. Construction activities would take place in two phases. Phase 1 would include construction of the Bear Creek pump station on the refuge, installation of the pipeline from Bear Creek to the pump station, and installation of the pipeline through the refuge, terminating at the southern levee of the East Bear Creek Unit. If deemed necessary for reliability and pending funding, the remainder of the pipeline connecting the

southern pump station (located on the north side of the San Joaquin River) to the Island C Canal would be constructed in Phase 2.

Written comments should be sent to Mr. Michael Kinsey, Bureau of Reclamation, 1243 "N" Street, Fresno, California 93721-1813 or faxed to 559-487-5397 by close of business on October 20, 2005. The Draft EA is available online at

http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_projdetails.cfm?Project_ID=1900. For more information or to request a paper copy or CD of the Draft EA, please contact Mr. Kinsey at 559-487-5139, TDD 559-487-5933, or e-mail mkinsey@mp.usbr.gov. #

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