

## 1.1 Purpose of the Draft Environmental Impact Report

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) has been prepared to conform with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines. As described in Section 15121(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, an EIR is a public informational document that discloses significant environmental impacts of a proposed project, identifies possible minimization and mitigation measures, and describes reasonable alternatives to the proposed project.

As the lead agency for the Long-Term Operations of the State Water Project (SWP) facilities in the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta (Delta), Suisun Marsh, and Suisun Bay (Proposed Project), the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will use the information in this EIR to evaluate the Proposed Project’s potential environmental impacts; determine whether any feasible mitigation measures and alternatives are necessary and available to reduce potentially significant environmental impacts; and approve, modify, or deny approval of the Proposed Project. This document also may be used by (1) the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), as a responsible agency as defined by CEQA, in its discretionary approval process and consideration to issue a new incidental take permit pursuant to Section 2081 of the California Fish and Game Code for the Proposed Project, and (2) the State Water Resources Control Board, as a responsible agency as defined by CEQA, in its discretionary approval process and consideration to issue a water rights time extension for DWR’s Feather River/ Delta water right permits 16478, 16479, 16481, 16482, 16477, and 16480 to allow long-term operations consistent with the diversion rates and quantities evaluated in this EIR.

The preparation of an EIR involves multiple steps in which the public is provided the opportunity to review and comment on the scope of the analysis, the content of the EIR, the results and conclusions presented, and the overall adequacy of the document to comply with the requirements of CEQA.

## 1.2 DEIR Preparation Process

The following discussion describes the EIR preparation process, including those activities completed to date and those to be performed that will lead to EIR certification.

## 1.2.1 Notice of Preparation and Scoping

DWR prepared and distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this DEIR on June 16, 2023. DWR provided copies of the NOP to (1) local, state, and federal agencies; (2) city and county clerk offices; and (3) other interested parties. A public notice was placed in seven newspapers with regional circulation to announce the availability of the NOP and the opportunity to submit comments. The NOP was circulated for comment for 31 days, ending on July 17, 2023. The NOP included a description of the project background, project location, a description of the Proposed Project, and a summary of potential environmental topics to be considered in the DEIR. The NOP also provided notice of a public scoping meeting.

The public scoping meeting was held virtually on June 27, 2023. The purpose of the public scoping meeting was to provide a forum for the public to learn about the Proposed Project and make verbal and written comments on the proposed scope and content of the DEIR.

## 1.2.2 Initial Study

DWR prepared an Initial Study (provided in Appendix 3A), consistent with the requirements of Section 15063(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines. The purpose of the Initial Study is to assist with the preparation of the DEIR by focusing the analysis on the impacts determined to be potentially significant, identifying resources that would be affected but where impacts were determined not to be significant, and explaining the reasons for determining that potentially significant impacts would not be significant.

Based on the information and analyses developed, the Initial Study concluded that the proposed long-term operation of the SWP would not have a significant impact on the following resource topics:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources (Terrestrial)
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

The Initial Study, provided in Appendix 3A, concluded that the Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts on hydrology or surface water resources. However, because the Proposed Project would alter existing hydrology, such changes could result in impacts on resources dependent upon existing hydrologic conditions. These resources include water quality and aquatic biological resources.

To provide the reader with an understanding of the potential project impacts on water quality and aquatic biological resources, this DEIR presents a description of the existing hydrologic setting and

compares it with the estimated hydrology associated with the Proposed Project to support the impact conclusions.

### 1.2.3 DEIR

This DEIR is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 47 days, from May 29, 2024 to July 15, 2024. The DEIR and associated Notice of Completion were filed with the California Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse on May 29, 2024.

DWR provided public notice of availability of the DEIR as required by Section 15087 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Written notice was provided to the last known name and address of all individuals and organizations who previously requested such notice, including the 28 parties who submitted comments in response to the NOP. A public notice of availability was placed in seven newspapers with regional circulation, announcing the availability of the EIR and opportunity to submit comments. The public notice was also distributed to:

- 7 County Clerk offices
- 28 state agencies
- 7 federal agencies
- 21 county supervisors and planning departments
- 15 cities
- 32 elected officials including California State Assembly Members and Senators and U.S. Senators and Representatives.

A public meeting will be held on June 18, 2024 to receive input from agencies and the public on the DEIR. During the public comment period, written comments from organizations, agencies, and the public on the DEIR may be submitted to DWR. Written comments (including those sent via email) must be received by 5 p.m. on July 15, 2024. Written comments should be addressed to:

Chris Wilkinson  
Environmental Program Manager II  
Division of Integrated Science and Engineering  
Department of Water Resources  
P.O. Box 942836  
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

E-mail comments and questions may be addressed to [SWPDeltaOps@water.ca.gov](mailto:SWPDeltaOps@water.ca.gov).

Digital copies of the DEIR are available on the DWR website at [Public Notices \(ca.gov\)](#). A hard copy is available at DWR's office at 3500 Industrial Boulevard, West Sacramento, CA 95691. Digital copies are also available for public review at the following locations:

- Alameda County Library, 200 Civic Plaza, Dublin, CA 94568
- Contra Costa County Library, 104 Oak Street, Brentwood, CA 94513
- Sacramento County Library, 828 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
- San Joaquin County Library, 605 N. El Dorado St., Stockton, CA 95202
- Solano County Library, 1150 Kentucky Street, Fairfield, CA 94533

- Sutter County Library, 750 Forbes Ave., Yuba City, CA 95991
- Yolo County Library, Central Library, 315 E. 14th Street, Davis, CA, 95616

References cited in the DEIR are available for review at DWR's office at 3500 Industrial Boulevard, West Sacramento, CA 95691 and upon request via email to SWPDeltaOps@water.ca.gov.

## 1.2.4 Final EIR and Certification

Following the public comment period, responses to comments that have been received on environmental issues will be prepared. Consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(b), commenting public agencies will be provided a minimum of 10 days to review the proposed responses to their comments before any action is taken on the Final EIR or Proposed Project. The Final EIR will be considered for certification and approval by DWR.

## 1.3 DEIR Organization

This DEIR is organized as follows.

**Chapter 00, "Executive Summary":** This chapter introduces the Proposed Project and summarizes the environmental consequences, findings, areas of controversy, and issues to be resolved.

**Chapter 1, "Introduction":** This chapter describes the legal authority and purpose of the DEIR, the DEIR preparation process, the CEQA public review process, and the organization of this document.

**Chapter 2, "Project Description":** This chapter describes the project background, objectives, and location, and provides a detailed description of the characteristics associated with the Proposed Project.

**Chapter 3, "Scope of Analysis":** This chapter describes the scope of the environmental analysis, including the approach to modeling.

**Chapter 4, "Surface Water Hydrology":** This chapter describes the impacts on hydrology due to the Proposed Project to provide a basis for understanding the potential impacts on other secondary environmental resources evaluated in this DEIR.

The regulatory setting, environmental setting, methods and assumptions, and thresholds of significance are also described. The anticipated changes to the existing environmental conditions after Proposed Project implementation are evaluated for hydrology. If any significant or potentially significant impact would occur as a result of the Proposed Project, mitigation measures are presented, followed by the remaining level of significance.

**Chapter 5, "Surface Water Quality":** This chapter describes the direct and indirect impacts on surface water quality due to the Proposed Project.

The regulatory setting, environmental setting, methods and assumptions, and thresholds of significance are also described. The anticipated changes to the existing environmental conditions after Proposed Project implementation are evaluated. If any significant or potentially significant impact would occur as a result of the Proposed Project, mitigation measures are presented, followed by the remaining level of significance.

**Chapter 6, “Aquatic Biological Resources”:** This chapter describes the direct and indirect impacts on aquatic biological resources due to the Proposed Project.

The regulatory setting, environmental setting, methods and assumptions, and thresholds of significance are also described. The anticipated changes to the existing environmental conditions after Proposed Project implementation are evaluated. If any significant or potentially significant impact would occur as a result of the Proposed Project, mitigation measures are presented, followed by the remaining level of significance.

**Chapter 7, “Tribal Cultural Resources”:** This chapter describes the direct and indirect impacts on known and unknown tribal cultural resources due to the Proposed Project.

The regulatory setting and general discussion of site features, places, cultural landscapes, and sacred places or objects of cultural value to a tribe are also presented. The anticipated changes to the existing environmental conditions after Proposed Project implementation are evaluated. If any significant or potentially significant impact would occur as a result of the Proposed Project, mitigation measures are presented, followed by the remaining level of significance.

**Chapter 8, “Environmental Justice”:** This chapter describes the direct and indirect impacts on minority and low-income populations relating to environmental justice due to the Proposed Project.

The regulatory setting and geographic background are also described. If any significant or potentially significant impact would occur as a result of the Proposed Project, mitigation measures are presented, followed by the remaining level of significance.

**Chapter 9, “Climate Change Resiliency and Adaptation”:** This chapter evaluates how observed trends and projected future conditions show the need for the Proposed Project and how climate change could influence the ability of the Proposed Project to fulfill its intended purpose, and presents information about how the Proposed Project would help meet the challenges posed by climate change and how the Proposed Project will improve California and the Delta’s resiliency and ability to adapt to extreme climate events or shifts in climate.

The affected environment and resources, applicable laws and regulations, and potential climate change impacts on baseline operations and the Proposed Project are also described.

**Chapter 10, “Other CEQA Discussions”:** This chapter presents discussions of other CEQA-required topics, including growth-inducing impacts. In addition, this chapter includes information regarding the potential cumulative impacts that would result from the Proposed Project together with other past, present, and probable future projects.

**Chapter 11, “Alternatives to the Proposed Project”:** This chapter discusses four alternatives to the Proposed Project, including the No Project Alternative.

**Chapter 12, “References”:** This chapter lists the documents and other sources of information that are cited in the DEIR.

**Chapter 13, “Preparers and Other Persons Consulted”:** This chapter identifies the individuals who contributed to preparation of the DEIR.

**Appendices:** The DEIR includes appendices that provide technical studies, calculations, computer modeling output, and other information supporting the findings and conclusions of specific technical analyses.