

1 INTRODUCTION

This environmental impact report (EIR) has been prepared to evaluate the environmental effects of implementing the Sacramento County Water Agency's (SCWA) 2002 Zone 40 Water Supply Master Plan (2002 Zone 40 WSMP) (December 31, 2002). The 2002 Zone 40 WSMP provides a flexible plan of water management alternatives to meet future water demands in the Zone 40 2030 Study Area through the year 2030 (Appendix A).

1.1 TYPE, PURPOSE, AND USE OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This EIR has been prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) (Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] §15000 et seq.), as amended. An EIR is a full-disclosure, public information document in which the significant environmental impacts of a proposed project are evaluated, feasible measures to mitigate significant impacts are identified, and alternatives to the project that can reduce or avoid significant environmental impacts are discussed. The project is described in Chapter 3, Project Description, and impacts are evaluated in Chapter 4, Environmental Impact Analysis. Alternatives to the project are addressed in accordance with §15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines and are evaluated in detail in Chapter 7, Alternatives.

An EIR is used in the planning and decision-making process by the lead agency and responsible agencies. The State CEQA Guidelines define “lead agency” as the public agency with principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project. The Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA) is the lead agency for the proposed project. The term “responsible agency” refers to all public agencies, other than the lead agency, that have discretionary approval of elements of a project.

The purpose of an EIR is not to recommend approval or denial of a project. CEQA requires decision makers to balance the benefits of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental impacts in deciding whether to carry out a project. If environmental impacts are identified as significant and unavoidable, SCWA may still approve the project if it believes that the social, economic, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable impacts. SCWA would then be required to prepare “findings” and a “statement of overriding considerations” that discuss specific reasons for approving the project, based on information in the EIR and other information in the record.

1.1.1 PROGRAM EIR

This document is a program EIR. A program EIR identifies and assesses the environmental impacts of a series of actions that compose an overall program, such as the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP. As described in State CEQA Guidelines §15168, a program EIR may be prepared based on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with

issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways.

Subsequent activities implementing the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP must be examined in light of the program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared. If a later activity would have effects that were not examined in the program EIR, a new initial study would need to be prepared, leading to either a negative declaration or an EIR. If no new effects could occur or no new mitigation would be required, the activity can be approved as being within the scope of the project covered by the program EIR, and no new environmental document would be required. However, when a program EIR is relied on during implementation of subsequent activities, the lead agency must incorporate into the subsequent activities feasible mitigation guidelines, mitigation, and alternatives that were developed in the program EIR.

One advantage of program EIRs is that they allow consideration of broad policy alternatives and programmatic mitigation. As allowed by the State CEQA Guidelines, the mitigation identified in this EIR is intended to be incorporated into the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP as policy direction for development of 2002 Zone 40 WSMP projects.

1.1.2 TIERING

The analyses in this EIR are tiered from analyses in the Water Forum Agreement EIR (WRA EIR), where appropriate. As described in State CEQA Guidelines §15152(a), “tiering” refers to using analyses contained in a broader EIR in later EIRs on narrower projects, incorporating by reference the general discussions from the broader EIR, and concentrating the later EIR solely on the issues specific to the later project. Surface water diversions proposed in the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP were contemplated in the WFA EIR, which addressed long-term, regional water supply. The WFA EIR identified additional water supplies to meet future demand in the cities of Sacramento, Roseville, Folsom, Galt, and Citrus Heights, Sacramento County, south Placer County, and western El Dorado County to the year 2030. The Zone 40 2030 Study Area is located in the southern portion of the WFA study area.

1.1.3 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Section 15150 (a) of the State CEQA Guidelines states that an EIR “may incorporate by reference all or portions of another document which is a matter of public record or is generally available to the public. Where all or part of another document is incorporated by reference, the incorporated language shall be considered to be set forth in full as part of the text of the EIR.”

Zone 40 lies in Rancho Cordova and Elk Grove and in unincorporated Sacramento County. Land located in Zone 40 is subject to the land use policies outlined in the Sacramento County General Plan Update (1993). As a result, the 1993 Sacramento County General Plan Update is

hereby incorporated by reference. A copy of this document can be reviewed at the Sacramento County Department of Environmental Review and Assessment, 827 7th Street, Room 220, Sacramento, California 95814.

The EIR prepared for the WFA evaluated the environmental effects of a large-scale program of interrelated actions designed to provide a reliable water supply for the Sacramento Region to the year 2030. As a participant in the Water Forum process and signatory to the WFA, SCWA's water supply needs, in combination with other water supply needs in the region, were evaluated in the 1999 WFA EIR. Because of the direct relationship of the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP to the WFA, the EIR for the WFA is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety (Final Environmental Impact Report for the Water Forum Proposal, October 1999; State of California Clearinghouse Number 95082041; City of Sacramento Control Number 8810; County of Sacramento Control Number 98-PWE-0648). Portions of the WFA EIR are summarized throughout this document, where appropriate. Copies of these documents can be reviewed at the Sacramento County Department of Environmental Review and Assessment, 827 7th Street, Room 220, Sacramento, California 95814.

The EIR for the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP programmatically evaluates the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the facilities and programs recommended in the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP. To the degree that information is available on the location and design of recommended facilities, it is evaluated in this EIR. As more information becomes available regarding certain elements, the environmental impacts would need to be evaluated in a separate environmental document. One of the project options (Freeport Regional Water Project) evaluated in the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP was evaluated at a project-specific level of analysis in the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Freeport Regional Water Project prepared by the Freeport Regional Water Authority (Draft EIR/EIS for the Freeport Regional Water Project, August 2003; State of California Clearinghouse Number 2002032132). Portions of the environmental analysis included in the EIR/EIS for the Freeport Regional Water Project as it pertains to impacts within Zone 40 are hereby incorporated by reference and summarized throughout this document, where appropriate. A copy of this document can be reviewed at the Sacramento County Department of Environmental Review and Assessment, 827 7th Street, Room 220, Sacramento, California 95814.

1.2 EIR FOCUS

As provided in §15143 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the focus of an EIR is limited to specific issues where significant effects on the environment may occur. A notice of preparation (NOP) was prepared for the draft EIR for the 2002 Zone 40 WSMP and is included as Appendix B. The NOP included a description of the project, its location, and potential environmental effects of the project. The following issues were identified in the NOP as having the potential to result in significant impacts: biological resources (including impacts on the Cosumnes River), land use and growth-inducement, aesthetics, air quality, noise, traffic (construction-related impacts), cultural resources, geology and soils, public health and safety, water

resources, and public services and utilities systems. The NOP was circulated to state and local agencies and interested members of the public. The public comment period began on December 10, 2002, and concluded on January 9, 2003.

1.3 RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES THAT MAY USE THIS EIR

Although SCWA, as lead agency, has primary approval authority for the project, responsible agencies also have discretionary authority over elements of the project. This discretionary approval may include issuance of a permit or other required action. Responsible agencies may consider and use the analysis provided in this EIR to satisfy their responsibilities under CEQA, as they deem appropriate. The following is a list of agencies that may use this EIR for that purpose:

- ▶ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for Section 404 permit pursuant to the Clean Water Act, pertaining to the excavation in or the discharge of dredged material into waters of the United States;
- ▶ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for Section 7 consultation pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act pertaining to the incidental take of species federally listed as Threatened or Endangered;
- ▶ California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) for permits pursuant to the California Endangered Species Act, relative to species state listed as endangered, and streambed alteration agreement pursuant to Section 1601 of the California Fish and Game Code for alteration of the bed or banks of a surface water stream;
- ▶ California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) for water rights applications; and
- ▶ California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) for Section 401 water quality certification, in support of the Section 404 permit, and General Construction Activity Stormwater National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

1.4 PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

Public and agency review of a project is facilitated by Sacramento County through distribution of the NOP for a 30-day comment period (included in Appendix B) and circulation of the draft EIR for a 45-day public review period. Pursuant to Sacramento County procedures, a public hearing will be held to receive oral comments on the draft EIR. The purpose of public review of the draft EIR is to receive comments on the adequacy of the draft EIR in disclosing the adverse impacts of the project.

Following the close of the draft EIR public review period, Sacramento County will prepare and publish a final EIR that contains comments on the draft EIR, responses to those comments, and any changes to the draft EIR considered necessary. The final EIR will be forwarded to the

Sacramento County Water Agency Board of Directors for consideration during decision making for the proposed project.

If you wish to submit comments on the draft EIR, please submit your comments to:

Ms. Joyce Horizumi, Environmental Coordinator
County of Sacramento
Department of Environmental Review and Assessment
827 Seventh Street, Room 220
Sacramento, CA 95814

1.5 TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS EIR

This EIR includes the following terminology to denote the significance of environmental impacts of the proposed project:

- ▶ **Less-than-significant impact:** A less-than-significant impact does not cause a substantial adverse change in the environment. Impacts at this level do not require mitigation.
- ▶ **Significant impact:** CEQA §21068 defines a significant impact as “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment.” The environmental checklist included as Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines provides additional guidance regarding impacts that normally would be regarded as significant. This EIR uses the CEQA definition of “significant impact.” Mitigation or alternatives to the proposed project must be identified in an attempt to reduce the magnitude of significant impacts to less-than-significant levels.
- ▶ **Potentially significant impact:** A potentially significant impact is one that, if it were to occur, would be considered a significant impact as described above; however, the likelihood of the impact’s occurrence is uncertain. For example, although the EIR may provide evidence that buried archaeological resources could be found in a particular location, the actual discovery cannot be determined until the time of project construction. For CEQA purposes, a potentially significant impact is treated (i.e., mitigated) as if it were a significant impact. Mitigation or alternatives to the proposed project must be identified in an attempt to reduce the magnitude of significant impacts to less-than-significant levels.
- ▶ **Significant and unavoidable impact:** A significant and unavoidable impact is a substantial adverse effect on the environment that cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. A project with significant and unavoidable impacts could still proceed, but the County would be required to prepare a statement of overriding considerations, pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines §15093, explaining why the County would proceed with the project in spite of the potential for significant impacts.

- ▶ **Threshold of significance:** A threshold of significance is a criterion established by the lead agency to identify at what level an impact would be considered significant. A criterion is defined by a lead agency based on examples found in CEQA or the State CEQA Guidelines, scientific and factual data relative to the lead agency jurisdiction, views of the public in affected areas, the policy/regulatory environment of affected jurisdictions, and other factors.
- ▶ **Mitigation Measures:** Mitigation measures are referred to in this document as environmental mitigation guidelines. These guidelines will be used to craft measures to mitigate future project-level impacts. Such impacts will be analyzed in subsequent project-specific environmental documents.

1.6 EIR ORGANIZATION

This EIR is organized into chapters, as identified and briefly described below. Chapters are further divided into sections (e.g., Section 4.2, Air Quality).

Chapter 1, Introduction: This chapter presents the regulatory background, context, terminology, and organization of the EIR.

Chapter 2, Summary: Following introductory discussion, this chapter presents a summary of potential environmental impacts, environmental mitigation guidelines, and level of significance after mitigation (as fully described in Chapter 4).

Chapter 3, Project Description: This chapter presents the history of the project site, full description of the proposed project, and project objectives.

Chapter 4, Environmental Impact Analysis: This chapter presents an evaluation of the change in environmental conditions that would occur with implementation of the proposed project. It identifies the significance thresholds, the level of significance of the impacts, environmental mitigation guidelines and their effectiveness, and the level of significance of the impacts following mitigation.

Chapter 5, Cumulative Impacts: This CEQA-mandated chapter addresses the cumulative impacts of the proposed project in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

Chapter 6, Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts: This chapter presents a summary of the environmental impacts of the proposed project for which no mitigation is available to reduce the level of significance to less-than-significant levels.

Chapter 7, Alternatives: This chapter presents a comparison of environmental impacts of alternatives that could reduce potentially significant impacts of the proposed project while meeting the lead agency's basic objectives for the project.

Chapter 8, Report Preparation: This chapter identifies the lead agency personnel and consultants involved with preparation of this EIR.

Chapter 9, References: This chapter provides information on the references and personal communications used to prepare this EIR.

Appendices: This EIR includes seven appendices that provide either background information or additional technical support for the analysis.