



April 6, 2020

Delta Conveyance Scoping Comments  
Attn: Renee Rodriguez  
Department of Water Resources  
P.O. Box 942836  
Sacramento, CA 94236

SENT VIA EMAIL: [DeltaConveyanceScoping@water.ca.gov](mailto:DeltaConveyanceScoping@water.ca.gov)

Re: Comments on Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Delta Conveyance Project

Dear Ms. Rodriguez,

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Delta Conveyance Project (Proposed Project). Valley Water supports the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) fundamental purpose for proposing to develop new diversion and conveyance facilities in the Delta *"to restore and protect the reliability of the State Water Project (SWP) water deliveries and, potentially, Central Valley Project (CVP) water deliveries south of the Delta, consistent with the State's Water Resilience Portfolio"*. We also support the stated objectives of 1) addressing sea level rise and other foreseeable consequences of climate change and extreme weather events, 2) minimizing impacts to SWP and CVP water deliveries resulting from a major Delta levee failure event, 3) protecting the ability of the SWP and CVP to deliver water when it is available and consistent with state and federal law, and 4) providing operational flexibility to improve aquatic conditions.

Valley Water is the primary water resources management agency for Santa Clara County, providing wholesale water supply, stream stewardship, and flood protection for 1.9 million residents and thousands of job-creating Silicon Valley businesses. Daily commuters to Santa Clara County number over 200,000, with workers coming from other parts of the Bay Area and from the San Joaquin Valley. Valley Water also serves agricultural water users in the southern portion of the county.

Valley Water has water service contracts with both DWR and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) for water supplies from the SWP and CVP. These imported water supplies support many beneficial uses in Santa Clara County, and are critical to prevent the return of historic groundwater overdraft and land subsidence in San Jose and adjacent cities. SWP and CVP water supplies are the primary sources of supply for Valley Water's three drinking water treatment plants, and provide, on average, half the water delivered to the groundwater recharge system. During dry and critically dry years, more than 90 percent of the County's surface water supply is imported.



Valley Water has determined that if no action is taken, Valley Water's SWP and CVP supplies will be vulnerable to risks from declining ecosystem conditions, increasing regulatory restrictions, seismic risks, climate change, and sea level rise, resulting in reduced water supply reliability for Santa Clara County. DWR's Proposed Project has the potential to protect Valley Water's water supply reliability by upgrading aging infrastructure, thereby reducing the vulnerability of SWP and CVP water supplies to seismic events in the Delta and climate change impacts. It also has the potential to improve access to transfer supplies and increase the yield of storage projects while conveying water across the Delta in a way that is safer for the environment.

Since one of the key potential benefits of the Proposed Project is to protect water supply reliability from the impacts of sea level rise on water quantity and quality, Valley Water requests that DWR analyze both a no action alternative and a project alternative using the most up-to-date, but not too speculative, projections for sea level rise. We understand it is too speculative, and therefore, inappropriate to analyze sea level rise scenarios that would overtop existing levees, for example, in a CEQA/NEPA context due to the vast number of unknowns, such as whether levees will be raised and how beneficial uses may be reassessed.

In addition to modeling Proposed Project impacts under the less speculative climate change projections for the EIR and Environmental Impact Statement, separately, for purposes of assessing the potential benefits of the Proposed Project, and to ensure facilities are sited and designed to be able to adapt and continue to provide benefits in the event sea level rise is greater than assumptions used to model the Proposed Project impacts, we encourage DWR to qualitatively evaluate up to 10.2 feet of sea level rise at the Golden Gate Bridge in 2100.

Because Valley Water receives supplies from both the SWP and CVP, we request that DWR evaluate the full range of conveyance alternatives that meet the Proposed Project objectives, including cost-effective tunnel sizes and operations up to a 7,500 cfs capacity, single-tunnel alternative and full involvement of the CVP. To that end, we also encourage DWR, the Newsom Administration, and the federal government to quickly resolve their differences regarding the long-term, coordinated operations of the SWP and CVP, and find a path forward for Reclamation and CVP contractors' participation in the Proposed Project.

Valley Water also requests that DWR analyze the impacts of the proposed project on storage levels in San Luis Reservoir. Although Reclamation is currently considering a project to address the San Luis Reservoir low point issue that negatively impacts Valley Water's CVP supplies in dry years, the Proposed Project is likely to have impacts on San Luis Reservoir storage levels. When San Luis Reservoir is drawn down too low, the reliability and water quality of deliveries to the CVP San Felipe Division, which includes Valley Water, are adversely affected. When storage levels drop below an elevation of 369 feet, about 300,000 acre-feet (AF) in storage, known as "low point" conditions, algal blooms occurring during the summer can enter the lower intake of the Pacheco Pumping Plant and deliveries of Valley Water's CVP supplies can be adversely affected; water quality within the algal blooms is not suitable for municipal and industrial water users relying on existing water treatment facilities in Santa Clara County. Deliveries to the San Felipe Division may be severely or completely interrupted when storage levels are drawn down such that there is insufficient hydraulic head to effectively operate

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Pacheco Pumping Plant. While Valley Water is actively working with Reclamation and the State on a long-term solution to the low point problem, we request that the EIR provide a detailed description of the existing San Luis Reservoir low point issue, and operational protocols designed to minimize low point conditions. The EIR should also provide analysis and detail on the impacts of the action alternatives on storage levels, and on Valley Water's water supplies due to low point conditions.

Valley Water takes public input seriously. Stakeholder engagement within the Delta, as well as outside the Delta, is paramount for the success of the proposed project; therefore, public engagement throughout the duration of project planning is necessary. Valley Water supported the formation of the Stakeholder Engagement Committee to provide technical and related advisory input to the Delta Conveyance Authority during the planning phase activities. We appreciate DWR's involvement in this committee and DWR's other efforts to solicit meaningful stakeholder input. We encourage these efforts to continue and expand.

Valley Water recognizes that substantial local investments in water use efficiency and conservation, recycled water, and groundwater management are essential, and we remain committed to pursuing these actions; however, these actions cannot cost-effectively replace our imported water supplies. It is critical that we modernize our state's aging water delivery system, making it more resilient to climate extremes, sea level rise, and seismic events. We further recognize that improved Delta conveyance is only one piece of a portfolio of actions required to ensure water supply reliability and improve Delta ecosystem health. Like the State of California, Valley Water is committed to attaining the dual goals of reliable water supplies and healthy ecosystems. We continue to encourage DWR to develop solutions that meet both these objectives. Please do not hesitate to call Cindy Kao, Imported Water Manager, at 408-630-2346 if you have any questions regarding our comments.

Sincerely,



Norma J. Camacho  
Chief Executive Officer