

## Notice of Preparation

<b>Date:</b>	February 1, 2010
<b>To:</b>	Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse; Responsible Agencies; Agencies with Jurisdiction by Law; Trustee Agencies; Involved Federal Agencies; and Agencies/Individuals Requesting Notice
<b>Subject:</b>	Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Conveyance of Nonproject Groundwater from the Canalside Project using the California Aqueduct
<b>From:</b>	Westlands Water District
<b>Street Address:</b>	3130 North Fresno Street
<b>City/State/Zip:</b>	Fresno, CA 93793-6056
<b>Contact:</b>	Russ Freeman, Westlands Water District

Westlands Water District (WWD) is the lead agency for preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed project (described below). The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will serve as a responsible agency. WWD is interested in the views of your agency as to the appropriate scope and content of the EIR's environmental information pertaining to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

The proposed project, its location, and its potential environmental effects are described below.

Because of the time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date; the period for public comment is February 1, 2010 through March 5, 2010.

Please send your response no later than March 5, 2010, to the Westlands Water District, Attention: Russ Freeman, 3130 North Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93793-6056. Please provide a contact name for your agency with your comments.

<b>Project Title:</b>	Conveyance of Nonproject Groundwater from the Canalside Project using the California Aqueduct
<b>Project Proponent:</b>	Westlands Water District



## Project Location

WWD is located in western Fresno and Kings Counties. (See Figure 1.) The proposed project is located within the WWD boundaries along the California Aqueduct. The source of the water would be a series of wells distributed throughout the district.

## Project Description

WWD proposes to pump groundwater from land near the California Aqueduct and convey it through the Aqueduct for withdrawal and use on other land within the district. Because the project would require long-term use of facilities within the control of WWD and DWR, approvals are required from both agencies for the proposed project to commence.

## Purpose and Need

Landowners and water users within WWD rely on groundwater to meet existing need; many are using existing wells, reactivating old wells, or drilling wells within the district to meet water supply shortfalls for their farms. WWD's Central Valley Project (CVP) supply initial allocation is likely to be 0% for water year 2010–2011. In addition, the State Water Project (SWP) made an initial allocation only 5% to its contractors for the same year.

The Federal share of San Luis Reservoir, the primary source of WWD's allocations, became overdrawn in late summer 2009. The restricted pumping from the Delta to comply with recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinions (BOs) to protect delta smelt and salmon will continue to negatively affect storage and delivery in 2010.

A system of wider distribution of the withdrawn groundwater throughout WWD's service area would assist WWD users in meeting existing water demands when contract allocations are low. This distribution can be achieved by introducing the withdrawn well water into the California Aqueduct for distribution throughout WWD's service area. This method of conveyance allows the pumped water to be used more widely, maximizing groundwater's potential as a supplemental water source and resulting in more flexibility during years when CVP allocations are low.

## Location of Wells

The proposed project is located in Fresno and Kings Counties within the WWD boundaries along the California Aqueduct. The source of the water would be a series of groundwater wells in three groups within the district: the northern, central, and southern groups. The proposed project would result in no more than 100,000 acre-feet (af) of groundwater being pumped into the Aqueduct annually. The groundwater would be pumped into the aqueduct via several inlets on either side of the aqueduct. Although wells are located throughout the district, only those in areas where groundwater meets California Department of Public Health (CDPH) water quality standards for discharge into the California Aqueduct would be used.

## Conveyance Mechanisms

The project consists primarily of using facilities to convey and meter water from the approved wells to the California Aqueduct. Most of these facilities already exist; others would be installed in connection with this project. Water conveyance would be accomplished either directly into the aqueduct via privately owned pipelines or through WWD laterals.

The qualified groundwater pumped into the California Aqueduct in this manner would be subject to a reduction for transportation and other losses. The project participants either take delivery of an equal amount of water through WWD laterals or receive a credit for an equivalent amount of water for later delivery during the current water year, subject to the following options and limitations:

- At an additional cost, water can be exchanged for credit in San Luis Reservoir when adequate storage space exists in the DWR portion of storage space in San Luis Reservoir and when adequate space is available in the California Aqueduct to receive participating water.
- Banked nonproject groundwater is among the first water to be spilled (lost) when storage space is no longer available in San Luis Reservoir for SWP water.

## Project Pumping Pattern

The project permits credited water to be delivered, through WWD facilities, to the participants' lands, the vast majority of which are in the southern two-thirds of the district. Pumping would occur mostly between the months of May and September. However, to provide flexibility in water supply, pumping and conveyance may occur in other months.

Approximately two-thirds of the water proposed to be conveyed in the California Aqueduct would be in lieu of local groundwater pumping in the delivery areas. The project is limited to a maximum of 100,000 acre-feet per year (af/yr) of groundwater that may be delivered into the California Aqueduct during any single year. Because of water quality criteria and anticipated pumping restrictions, actual annual project volume may be less than this maximum value.

## Water Quality Component

To confirm that water from the participating wells meets the applicable drinking water standards of CDPH, the water user's groundwater would be tested before the water is transferred via the California Aqueduct. The water would continue to be tested at periodic intervals during pumping to ensure no water quality violations occur.

There are about 600 operational groundwater wells within the WWD. Only 15% of the total number of wells within WWD would participate in this project initially, and WWD would cap participation at 20%. The project area makes it infeasible to include all the wells in the District. Additional wells may be drilled in the future, primarily to replace wells that become less productive or that fail to meet required water quality standards.

## Water Banking, Allocation and Credit System

In the vicinity of WWD, the California Aqueduct is used jointly by Reclamation and DWR and is divided into federal and state shares. Although this division is not physical (that is, it is not divided into two), it establishes limits for the amount and ownership of the water conveyed. The groundwater pumped for this project would be conveyed in the DWR share of the aqueduct only.

Because the project's water, when discharged to the aqueduct, would mix with state and federal water, the pumped water could be used in WWD and downstream in lieu of releases from San Luis Reservoir. That is, the release from San Luis Reservoir could be reduced by the amount of pumped groundwater discharged to the California Aqueduct. (The discharged water would be measured by flowmeters, so its volume would be known.) This practice, known as water banking, allows an exchange of Canalside project water with water stored in San Luis Reservoir, providing the participant a credit for an equivalent amount of water in storage in San Luis Reservoir.

This water banking process would require a short-term storage requirement for this project of about 50,000 af in San Luis Reservoir.

Under the WWD credit system, groundwater delivered to the California Aqueduct is credited to project participants. Credit for water delivered to WWD in the aqueduct is reduced by 2% of the amount delivered to account for California Aqueduct losses from evaporation and seepage. WWD usually takes delivery of this water through other laterals along the aqueduct in the same month it is introduced; if demand is not adequate, a storage credit is given in the state portion of San Luis Reservoir for later delivery to WWD.

## Place of Use of Project Water

Water generated by this project would be used on historically irrigated lands in WWD. The water would be used to make up for reductions in firm CVP contract supply. WWD also has in place a set of policies that encourage the trading of water among farmers with landholdings in the district. Consequently, even though a member of the Canalside Group receives a credit for pumping groundwater into the California Aqueduct, that credit, generated by virtue of the proposed project, can result in the delivery of water to almost any parcel of land within the district.

The delivery of water within WWD is subject to the following limits:

- water would not be delivered to lands ineligible for water under the federal Reclamation laws, and
- water would not be delivered to lands that have not been historically irrigated.

## Required Permits and Approvals

The proposed project likely would require a county Department of Health Services permit for any new well construction, as well as Encroachment Permits for construction in California Aqueduct right-of-way or any creek right-of-way.

## Environmental Impact Report Scope

WWD has determined that the proposed project would require preparation of an EIR pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The following environmental topics will be evaluated in the EIR:

- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Air Quality, Noise, and Climate Change
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Land Use
- Public Services and Utilities
- Transportation and Circulation

## Notice of Scoping Meeting

Two scoping meetings will be held on February 23, 2010, to receive public comment concerning the scope of the EIR. The meetings will be held at the WWD's Board of Directors chambers, located at 3130 North Fresno Street, Fresno, California 93703, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Comments will be accepted, and each meeting will feature a project presentation beginning 20 minutes after the start of the meeting.

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

Westlands Water District  
Board of Directors Chambers  
3130 North Fresno Street  
Fresno, CA 93703

3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

## Notice of Preparation— Distribution List

Contact Name, Title	Organization	Address	City	State	Zip
<b>Government Organizations</b>					
Planning Division	Bay Area Air Quality Management District	939 Ellis Street	San Francisco	CA	94109
	Bethel Island Municipal Improvement District (BIMID)	P.O. Box 244	Bethel Island	CA	94511
Donald Koch, Director	California Department of Fish and Game	1416 Ninth Street	Sacramento	CA	95814
Chuck Armor, Regional Manager, Bay-Delta Region	California Department of Fish and Game	7329 Silverado Trail	Napa	CA	94558
Bill Loudermilk, Regional Manager, Central Region	California Department of Fish and Game	1234 E. Shaw Avenue	Fresno	CA	93710
Dr. Jeffrey R. Single, Regional Manager, Region 4	California Department of Fish and Game	1234 E. Shaw Avenue	Fresno	CA	93710
Rufus B. Howell, Chief	California Department of Public Health, Drinking Water and Environmental Management	P.O. Box 997377	Sacramento	CA	95899
Ross Chittenden, Director	California Department of Transportation, District 10	1976 East Charter Way/East Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd	Stockton	CA	95205
Bijan Sartipi, Director	California Department of Transportation, District 4	P.O. Box 23660	Oakland	CA	94623-0660
	California Department of Water Resources, Division of Water Resources	P.O. Box 942836	Sacramento	CA	94236
Delta Area Land Manager	California State Lands Commission, Environmental Division	100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100 South	Sacramento	CA	95825-8202
	Central Valley Flood Protection Board	P.O. Box 942836	Sacramento	CA	94236
Pamela Creedon, Executive Officer	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board	11020 Sun Center Drive #200	Rancho Cordova	CA	95670-6114
Alan Weaver, Director	County of Fresno Public Works and Planning Dept.	2220 Tulare Street	Fresno	CA	93721

Contact Name, Title	Organization	Address	City	State	Zip
<b>Government Organizations</b>					
Linda Fiack, Executive Director	Delta Protection Commission	P.O. Box 530	Walnut Grove	CA	95690
David Johnson	Department of Boating and Waterways	2000 Evergreen Street, Suite 100	Sacramento	CA	95815-3888
Roseanne Taylor	Department of Conservation	801 K Street, MS-24-02	Sacramento	CA	95814
Director	Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA Region IX	111 Broadway, Suite 1200	Oakland	CA	94607
Stephanie L. Kahl	Fresno County Community Health Department, Environmental Health Services, Water Surveillance program	P.O. Box 11867	Fresno	CA	93775
Dan Errotabere, President	Fresno Farm Bureau	1274 West Hedges Avenue	Fresno	CA	93728-1296
Bill Van Skike, President of Board	Kern County Water Agency	P.O. Box 58	Bakersfield	CA	93302-0058
	Metropolitan Water District of Southern California	1121 L Street, Suite 900	Sacramento	CA	95814
Maria Rea	National Marine Fisheries Service	650 Capitol Mall, Suite 8-300	Sacramento	CA	95814
Mr. Larry Myers, Executive Secretary	Native American Heritage Commission	915 Capitol Mall, Room 364	Sacramento	CA	95814
Milford Donaldson, SHPO	Office of Historic Preservation	1416 9th St., Room 1442-7	Sacramento	CA	95814
State Historian III	Office of Historic Preservation	1416 9th Street, Room 1442-7	Sacramento	CA	95814
Fred Zumthrun	Reclamation District 1003	1597 North Van Ness Avenue	Fresno	CA	93728
	Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency	1007 7th Street, 7th Floor	Sacramento	CA	95814
Mark Alvarez, Board Member	San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District	P.O. Box 5906	San Bernardino	CA	92412-5906
	San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board	1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400	Oakland	CA	94612
William O'Brien, Director	San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, Northern Region	4800 Enterprise Way	Modesto	CA	95356

Contact Name, Title	Organization	Address	City	State	Zip
<b>Government Organizations</b>					
Judith G. Case, Director	San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, Central Region Office	1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue	Fresno	CA	93726
Frances Mizuno	San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority	P.O. Box 2157	Los Banos	CA	93635
Dan Nelson	San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority	P.O. Box 2157	Los Banos	CA	93635
Michael Stearns, Chairman	San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority	P.O. Box 2157	Los Banos	CA	93635
Will Boschmann	Semitropic Water Storage District	1101 Central Avenue	Wasco	CA	93280-0877
Office of Planning and Research	State Clearinghouse	1400 10th Street, Rm 121	Sacramento	CA	95814
Victoria Whitney, Division of Water Rights	State Water Resources Control Board	P.O. Box 2000	Sacramento	CA	95812
Bill McDonnell, Senior Resource Specialist	The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California	1121 L Street, Suite 900	Sacramento	CA	95814
	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	1325 J Street, Room 1480	Sacramento	CA	95814
Donald Glaser	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	2800 Cottage Way, MP-700	Sacramento	CA	95825
James E. Turner, Esq., Assistant Regional Solicitor	U.S. Department of the Interior	2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1712	Sacramento	CA	95825-1898
Director	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9	75 Hawthorne Street	San Francisco	CA	94105
Assistant Regional Director	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2605	Sacramento	CA	95825
Arlen Lancaster, Chief	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	221 W. Court Street	Woodland	CA	95695
Charles D. Field, Vice President	Western Municipal Water District of Riverside County	450 Allesandro Boulevard	Riverside	CA	92508
Mayor Silve	City of Mendota	643 Quince Street	Mendota	CA	93640
Director, Planning Department	City of Mendota	643 Quince Street	Mendota	CA	93640



Graphics/Projects/00238.09 Westlands Water District (01-10) S5

**Figure 1**  
**Project Vicinity**