

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE DELTA CONVEYANCE PROJECT

January 15, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will initiate the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Delta Conveyance Project in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, California. DWR is the lead agency under CEQA.

The Delta Conveyance Project will also involve federal agencies that must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), likely requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Federal agencies with roles with respect to the project may include approvals or permits issued by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and United States Army Corps of Engineers. To assist in the anticipated federal agencies' NEPA compliance, DWR will prepare an EIR that includes relevant NEPA information where appropriate. Once the role of the federal lead agency is established, that federal lead agency will publish a Notice of Intent to formally initiate the NEPA process.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In July 2017, DWR had previously approved a conveyance project in the Delta involving two tunnels referred to as "California WaterFix." In his State of the State address delivered February 12, 2019, Governor Newsom announced that he did not "support WaterFix as currently configured" but does "support a single tunnel." On April 29, 2019, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-10-19, directing several agencies to (among other things), "inventory and assess... [c]urrent planning to modernize conveyance through the Bay Delta with a new single tunnel project." The Governor's announcement and Executive Order led to DWR's withdrawal of all approvals and environmental compliance documentation associated with California WaterFix. The CEQA process identified in this notice for the proposed Delta Conveyance Project will, as appropriate, utilize relevant information from the past environmental planning process for California WaterFix but the proposed project will undergo a new stand-alone environmental analysis leading to issuance of a new EIR.

PROPOSED DELTA CONVEYANCE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Purpose and Project Objectives

CEQA requires that an EIR contain a "statement of the objectives sought by the proposed project." Under CEQA, "[a] clearly written statement of objectives will help the lead agency develop a reasonable range of alternatives to evaluate in the EIR and will aid the decision makers

in preparing findings or a statement of overriding considerations. The statement of objectives should include the underlying purpose of the project and may discuss the project benefits” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15124[b]).

Here, as the CEQA lead agency, DWR’s underlying, or fundamental, purpose in proposing the project is to develop new diversion and conveyance facilities in the Delta necessary to restore and protect the reliability of 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.

The above stated purpose, in turn, gives rise to several project objectives. In proposing to make physical improvements to the SWP Delta conveyance system, the project objectives are:

- To address anticipated rising sea levels and other reasonably foreseeable consequences of climate change and extreme weather events.
- To minimize the potential for public health and safety impacts from reduced quantity and quality of SWP water deliveries, and potentially CVP water deliveries, south of the Delta resulting from a major earthquake that causes breaching of Delta levees and the inundation of brackish water into the areas in which the existing SWP and CVP pumping plants operate in the southern Delta.
- To protect the ability of the SWP, and potentially the CVP, to deliver water when hydrologic conditions result in the availability of sufficient amounts, consistent with the requirements of state and federal law, including the California and federal Endangered Species Acts and Delta Reform Act, as well as the terms and conditions of water delivery contracts and other existing applicable agreements.
- To provide operational flexibility to improve aquatic conditions in the Delta and better manage risks of further regulatory constraints on project operations.¹

Description of Proposed Project Facilities

The existing SWP Delta water conveyance facilities, which include Clifton Court Forebay and the Banks Pumping Plant in the south Delta, enable DWR to divert water and lift it into the California Aqueduct. The proposed project would construct and operate new conveyance facilities in the Delta that would add to the existing SWP infrastructure. New intake facilities as points of diversion would be located in the north Delta along the Sacramento River between Freeport and the confluence with Sutter Slough. The new conveyance facilities would include a tunnel to convey water from the new intakes to the existing Banks Pumping Plant and potentially the federal Jones Pumping Plant in the south Delta. The new facilities would provide an alternate location for diversion of water from the Delta and would be operated in coordination with the existing south Delta pumping facilities, resulting in a system also known as "dual conveyance"

¹ These objectives are subject to refinement during the process of preparing a Draft EIR.

because there would be two complementary methods to divert and convey water. New facilities proposed for the Delta Conveyance Project include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Intake facilities on the Sacramento River
- Tunnel reaches and tunnel shafts
- Forebays
- Pumping plant
- South Delta Conveyance Facilities

Figure 1 shows the areas under consideration for these facilities. Other ancillary facilities may be constructed to support construction of the conveyance facilities including, but not limited to, access roads, barge unloading facilities, concrete batch plants, fuel stations, mitigation areas, and power transmission and/or distribution lines.

Under the proposed project, the new north Delta facilities would be sized to convey up to 6,000 cfs of water from the Sacramento River to the SWP facilities in the south Delta (with alternatives of different flow rates, as described in the “Alternatives” section below). DWR would operate the proposed north Delta facilities and the existing south Delta facilities in compliance with all state and federal regulatory requirements and would not reduce DWR’s current ability to meet standards in the Delta to protect biological resources and water quality for beneficial uses. Operations of the conveyance facilities are proposed to increase DWR’s ability to capture water during high flow events. Although initial operating criteria of the proposed project would be formulated during the preparation of the upcoming Draft EIR in order to assess potential environmental impacts and mitigation, final project operations would be determined after completion of the CEQA process, obtaining appropriate water right approvals through the State Water Resources Control Board’s change in point of diversion process, and completing the consultation and review requirements of the federal Endangered Species Act and California Endangered Species Act. Construction and commissioning of the overall conveyance project, if approved, would take approximately 13 years, but the duration of construction at most locations would vary and would not extend for this full construction period.

Reclamation is considering the potential option to involve the CVP in the Delta Conveyance Project. Because of this possibility, the connection to the existing Jones Pumping Plant in the south Delta is included in the proposed facility descriptions below. The proposed project may include a portion of the overall capacity dedicated for CVP use, or it may accommodate CVP use of available capacity (when not used by SWP participants). If Reclamation determines that there could be a role for the CVP in the Delta Conveyance Project, this role would be identified in a separate NEPA Notice of Intent issued by Reclamation.

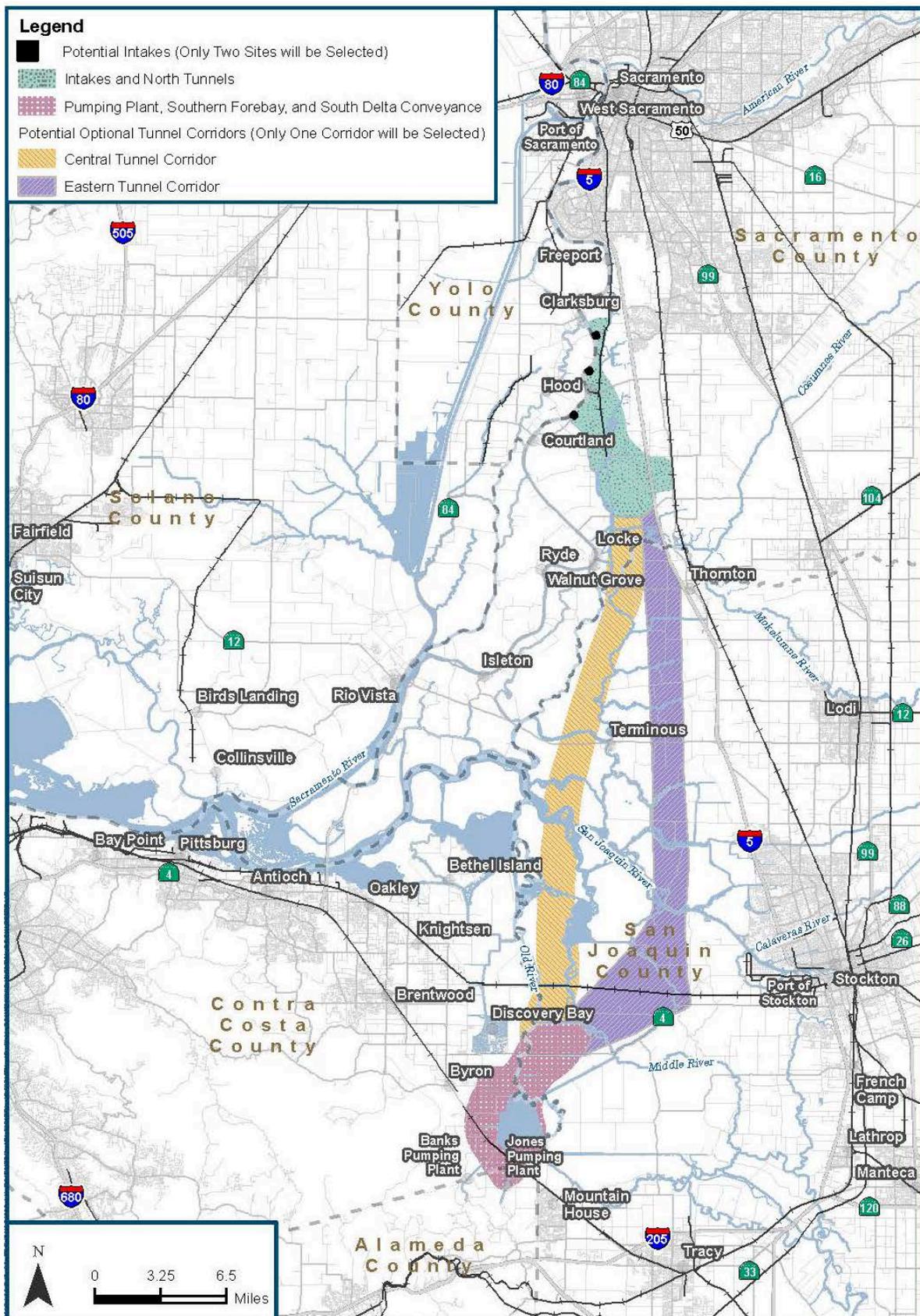


Figure 1. Proposed Project Facility Corridor Options

Intake Facilities

The proposed intake facilities would be located along the Sacramento River between Freeport and the confluence with Sutter Slough, as shown in Figure 1. The proposed project would include two intakes with a maximum diversion capacity of about 3,000 cfs each. The size of each intake location could range from 75 to 150 acres, depending upon fish screen selection, along the Sacramento River and include a state-of-the-art fish screen, sedimentation basins, tunnel shaft, and ancillary facilities. An additional 40 to 60 acres at each intake location would be temporarily disturbed for staging of construction facilities, materials storage, and a concrete batch plant, if needed.

Tunnel and Tunnel Shafts

The proposed project would construct up to two north connecting tunnel reaches to connect the intakes to an Intermediate Forebay (see “Forebays” section below), a single main tunnel from the Intermediate Forebay to a new Southern Forebay, and two connecting south tunnel reaches as part of the proposed project’s South Delta Conveyance Facilities (see “South Delta Conveyance Facilities” section below) to connect to the existing SWP and, potentially CVP, facilities in the south Delta. The single main tunnel would follow one of two potential optional corridors as shown in Figure 1.

The proposed single main tunnel and connecting tunnel reaches would be constructed underground with the bottom of the tunnel at approximately 190 feet below the ground surface. Construction for the tunnel would require a series of launch shafts and retrieval shafts. Each launch and retrieval shaft site would require a permanent area of about four acres. Launch sites would involve temporary use of up to about 400 acres for construction staging and material storage. Depending on the location, the shafts may also require flood protection facilities to extend up to about 45 feet above the existing ground surface to avoid water from entering the tunnel from the ground surface if the area was flooded. Earthen material would be removed from below the ground surface as tunnel construction progresses; this reusable tunnel material could be reused for embankments or other purposes in the Delta or stored near the launch shaft locations.

Forebays

The proposed project would include an Intermediate Forebay and a Southern Forebay. The Intermediate Forebay would provide potential operational benefits and would be located along the tunnel corridor between the intakes and the pumping plant. The Southern Forebay would be located at the southern end of the single main tunnel and would facilitate conveyance to the existing SWP pumping facility and, potentially the CVP pumping facilities. The forebays would be constructed above the ground, and not within an existing water body. The size of the Intermediate Forebay would be approximately 100 acres with an additional 150 acres disturbed during construction for material and equipment storage, and reusable tunnel material storage. The embankments would be approximately 30 feet above the existing ground surface. Additional appurtenant structures, including a permanent crane, would extend up to 40 feet above the embankments.

The Southern Forebay would be located near the existing Clifton Court Forebay and would be approximately 900 acres with an additional 200 acres disturbed during construction for material and equipment storage, potential loading and offloading facilities, and reusable tunnel material storage. The Southern Forebay embankments would be up to 30 feet above the existing ground surface.

Pumping Plant

The proposed project would include a pumping plant located at the new Southern Forebay and would receive the water through the single main tunnel for discharge in the Southern Forebay. The pumping plant would be approximately 25 acres along the side of the Southern Forebay and would include support structures, with a permanent crane for maintenance as the highest feature that would extend approximately 70 feet above the existing ground surface. The temporary and permanent disturbed area for the pumping plant is included in the Southern Forebay area, described above.

South Delta Conveyance Facilities

The proposed project would include South Delta Conveyance Facilities that would extend from the new Southern Forebay to the existing Banks Pumping Plant inlet channel. The connection to the existing Banks Pumping Plant would be via canals with two tunnels to cross under the Byron Highway. The canals and associated control structures would be located over approximately 125 to 150 acres. Approximately 40 to 60 additional acres would be disturbed temporarily during construction. These facilities could also be used to connect the Southern Forebay to the CVP's Jones Pumping Plant.

Contract Amendment for Delta Conveyance

The proposed project may involve modifications to one or more of the State Water Resources Development System (commonly referred to as the SWP) water supply contracts to incorporate the Delta Conveyance Project. Therefore, if modifications move forward, the Delta Conveyance Project EIR will assess, as part of the proposed project, potential environmental impacts associated with reasonably foreseeable potential contract modifications.

PROJECT AREA

The proposed EIR project area for evaluation of impacts consists of the following three geographic regions, as shown in Figure 2, below.

- Upstream of the Delta region
- Statutory Delta (California Water Code Section 12220)
- South-of-Delta SWP Service Areas and, potentially, South-of-Delta CVP Service Areas.

The study areas will be specifically defined for each resource area evaluated in the EIR. Figure 3 shows the SWP South-of-Delta water contractors.



Figure 2. Project Area



Figure 3. SWP South-of-Delta Service Areas

ALTERNATIVES

As described above, the proposed project has been informed by past efforts taken within the Delta and the watersheds of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, including those undertaken through the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)/California WaterFix. As stated in CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a), the “EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives which are infeasible.”

The scoping process will inform preliminary locations, corridors, capacities and operations of new conveyance facilities to be evaluated in the EIR. In identifying the possible EIR alternatives to be analyzed in detail, DWR is currently considering alternatives with capacities that range from 3,000 to 7,500 cfs, with varying degrees of involvement of the CVP, including no involvement. DWR will make its final choice of potentially feasible alternatives to include in the Draft EIR after receipt of scoping comments.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

DWR as the lead agency will describe and analyze the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. DWR did not prepare an initial study so none is attached; the EIR will include the suite of resource categories contained in Appendix G of CEQA Guidelines. Probable effects may include:

- Water Supply: changes in water deliveries.
- Surface Water: changes in river flows in the Delta.
- Groundwater: potential effects to groundwater levels during operation.
- Water Quality: changes to water quality constituents and/or concentrations from operation of facilities.
- Geology and Seismicity: changes in risk of settlement during construction.
- Soils: changes in topsoil associated with construction of the water conveyance facilities.
- Fish and Aquatic Resources: effects to fish and aquatic resources from construction and operation of the water conveyance facilities.
- Terrestrial Biological Resources: effects to terrestrial species due to construction of the water conveyance facilities.
- Land Use: incompatibilities with land use designations.
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources: preservation or conversion of farmland.
- Recreation: displacement and reduction of recreation sites.
- Aesthetics and Visual Resources: effects to scenic views because of water conveyance facilities.
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources: effects to archeological and historical sites and tribal cultural resources.
- Transportation: vehicle miles traveled; effects on road and marine traffic.

- Public Services and Utilities: effects to regional or local utilities.
- Energy: changes to energy use from construction and operation of facilities.
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas: changes in criteria pollutant emissions and localized particulate matter from construction and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Noise: changes in noise and vibration from construction and operation of the facilities.
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials: potential conflicts with hazardous sites.
- Public Health: changes to surface water could potentially increase concerns about mosquito-borne diseases
- Mineral Resources: changes in availability of natural gas wells due to construction of the water conveyance facilities.
- Paleontological Resources: effects to paleontological resources due to excavation for borrow and for construction of tunnels and canals.
- Climate Change: increase resiliency to respond to climate change
- Growth Inducement and Other Indirect Effects: changes to land uses as a result of changes in water availability resulting from changes in water supply deliveries

Where the potential to cause significant environmental impacts are identified, the EIR will identify avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures that avoid or substantially lessen those impacts.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

DWR previously studied a similar project through efforts on the BDCP and subsequently the California WaterFix. The proposed Delta Conveyance Project is a new project and is not supplemental to these past efforts or tiered from previous environmental compliance documents. This section provides background on these past efforts.

In October 2006, various state and federal agencies, water contractors, and other stakeholders initiated a process to develop what became known as the BDCP to advance the objectives of contributing to the restoration of ecological functions in the Delta and improving water supply reliability for the SWP and CVP Delta operations in the State of California.

In December 2013, after several years of preparation, DWR, Reclamation, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service, acting as joint lead agencies under CEQA and NEPA, published a draft of the BDCP and an associated Draft EIR/EIS. The Draft EIR/EIS analyzed a total of 15 action alternatives, including Alternative 4, which was identified as DWR's preferred alternative at that time.

In July of 2015, after taking public and agency input into account, the lead agencies formulated three new sub-alternatives (2D, 4A, 5A) and released a Partially Recirculated Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS (RDEIR/SDEIS) for public comment. Alternative 4A, which is known as "California WaterFix" was identified as DWR and Reclamation's preferred alternative in the RDEIR/SDEIS.

On July 21, 2017, DWR certified the Final EIR and approved California WaterFix. Following

that approval, DWR continued to further refine the project, resulting in reductions to environmental impacts. These project refinements required additional CEQA/NEPA documentation.

On January 23, 2018, DWR submitted an addendum summarizing proposed project modifications to California WaterFix associated with refinements to the transmission line corridors proposed by the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. The Addendum described the design of the applicable modified California WaterFix power features, proposed modifications to those power features (including an explanation of the need for the modifications), the expected benefits of the modifications to the transmission lines, and potential environmental effects as a result of those power related modifications (as compared to the impacts analyzed in the certified Final EIR).

On July 18, 2018, DWR released the California WaterFix Draft Supplemental EIR, which evaluated proposed changes to the certain conveyance facilities of the approved project. (No Final Supplemental EIR was ever completed, due to the change in direction dictated by Governor Newsom's State of the State speech and Executive Order N-10-19.) On September 21, 2018, Reclamation issued the California WaterFix Draft Supplemental EIS, including an alternatives comparison.

SCOPING MEETINGS

The proposed project is of statewide, regional or area-wide significance; therefore, a CEQA scoping meeting is required pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21083.9, subdivision (a)(2). Public Scoping meetings are scheduled to take place at the following times and locations:

- Monday, February 3, 2020, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. California Environmental Protection Agency Building, 1001 I Street, Sacramento
- Wednesday, February 5, 2020, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Junipero Serra State Building, 320 West Fourth Street, Los Angeles
- Monday, February 10, 2020, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Jean Harvie Community Center, 14273 River Road, Walnut Grove
- Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Santa Clara Valley Water District Board Room, 5750 Almaden Expressway, San Jose
- Thursday, February 13, 2020, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. San Joaquin Council of Governments Board Room, 555 Weber Avenue, Stockton
- Wednesday, February 19, 2020, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Clarksburg Middle School Auditorium, 52870 Netherlands Road, Clarksburg
- Thursday, February 20, 2020, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Brentwood Community Center Conference Room, 35 Oak Street, Brentwood

Anyone interested in more information concerning the EIR process, or anyone who has information concerning the study or suggestions as to significant issues, should contact Marcus Yee at (916) 651-6736.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

This notice is being furnished to obtain suggestions and information from other agencies and the public on the scope of issues and alternatives to consider in developing the EIR. The primary purpose of the scoping process is to identify important issues raised by the public and responsible and trustee public agencies related to the issuance of regulatory permits and authorizations and natural resource protection. Written comments from interested parties are invited to ensure that the full range of environmental issues related to the development of the EIR are identified. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public.

Written comments on this part of the Scoping process will be accepted until 5 p.m. on March 20, 2020 and can be submitted in several ways:

- Via email: DeltaConveyanceScoping@water.ca.gov
- Via Mail: Delta Conveyance Scoping Comments, Attn: Renee Rodriguez, Department of Water Resources, P.O. Box 942836, Sacramento, CA 94236

As required by the CEQA Guidelines, within 30 days after receiving the Notice of Preparation, each responsible and trustee agency is required to provide the lead agency with specific detail about the scope, significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures related to the responsible or trustee agency's area of statutory responsibility that will need to be explored in the EIR. In the response, responsible and trustee agencies should indicate their respective level of responsibility for the project.

PLEASE NOTE: DWR's practice is to make the entirety of comments received a part of the public record. Therefore names, home addresses, home phone numbers, and email addresses of commenters, if included in the response, will be made part of the record available for public review. Individual commenters may request that DWR withhold their name and/or home addresses, etc., but if you wish DWR to consider withholding this information you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. In the absence of this written request, this information will be made part of the record for public review. DWR will always make submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives of, or officials of, organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.