



## United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
Mid-Pacific Regional Office  
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Sacramento, California 95825-1898

IN REPLY  
REFER TO:

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To: Interested Parties

From: Roger K. Patterson  
Regional Director

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement and Planning Report for the  
American River Water Resources Investigation

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has completed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Planning Report for the American River Water Resources Investigation (ARWRI).

Reclamation and the Sacramento Metropolitan Water Authority (SMWA) prepared a joint draft environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (DEIR/DEIS) for the ARWRI in February 1996. SMWA has decided not to prepare a Final Environmental Impact Report at this time pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

The purpose of the ARWRI was to develop a water management program to meet the future water needs of the region through the year 2030. The FEIS describes the environmental effects of three alternatives, including a no-action alternative. The SMWA and Reclamation identified alternatives that will provide for the water supply needs of California's Central Valley from the Bear and Feather rivers on the north to the Stanislaus River on the south, and from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta on the west to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Two basic alternative plans were developed - conjunctive use and Auburn Dam. Many components are shared between the alternatives, and sizing may vary according to which alternative is selected. The DEIR/DEIS analyzed the impacts of these alternatives at a program level of detail and will serve as the umbrella document for future site-specific environmental documents.

Reclamation is not proposing to initiate any Federal action to meet the local area's needs. Reclamation will, as appropriate, cooperate with local agencies as specific water management activities with applicable statutes, including the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act, where applicable.

The FEIS incorporates the DEIR/DEIS by reference and includes all comments received on the DEIR/DEIS and responses to those comments. No decision will be made on the proposed action until 30 days after release of the FEIS. After the 30-day waiting period, Reclamation will complete a Record of Decision which states the action that will be implemented and will discuss all factors leading to the decision.

**RECORD OF DECISION**  
**AMERICAN RIVER WATER RESOURCES INVESTIGATION**  
**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

MAY 1998

OFFICIAL FILE COPY		
DATE	EXHIBIT NAME	CODE
4-27-98	A Stand	120
4/27	Landfill	130
4/30	T/K	CE150
5/6	dm	150
5/10	Teds	105
5/10	Ball	100

**I. INTRODUCTION**

This document constitutes the Record of Decision of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Mid-Pacific Region, regarding the proposed action for the American River Water Resources Investigation (ARWRI). The ARWRI is the subject of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), ARWRI, California (FES 97-36, dated November 27, 1997), developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

**II. RECOMMENDED DECISION**

Reclamation has not identified a Federal role for meeting the future water needs of the ARWRI study area; therefore, a Federal program is not being selected.

While no Federal action will be initiated to meet the water needs of the local area, Reclamation will, as appropriate, cooperate with local agencies as specific water management activities are proposed and implemented. Reclamation would exercise its statutory authorities, such as that afforded by the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, to provide assistance in implementation and cooperate in the process with local lead officials. Such cooperation may involve individual actions on the part of Reclamation that constitute "major Federal actions", and as such would require that Reclamation comply with the NEPA and other Federal statutes. Under those circumstances, Reclamation would prepare the required additional documentation.

**III. OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The FEIS evaluated two Action Alternatives and a No Action Alternative. The alternatives provide a means of action through which the water needs of the five county (El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Sutter) study area are met through the year 2030.

The *No-Action Alternative* approximates conditions in the study area in the year 2030 without implementation of a water management plan to meet the study areas water needs.

The *Conjunctive Use Alternative* is based on providing regulatory storage in the study area groundwater system by varying the mix of surface water and groundwater used each year to meet water demands. The Conjunctive Use Alternative was identified as the Environmentally Superior Alternative in protecting the Nation's environment. This designation is based on the potential impacts associated with the Auburn Dam component being determined as significantly greater than the larger conjunctive use diversions during larger flow events.

The *Auburn Dam Alternative* includes regulatory storage at a new reservoir on the American River at Auburn. This alternative would increase the "firm" water supply to the study area; however, a certain level of conjunctive use of surface water and groundwater resources would still be required.

#### IV. BASIS OF DECISION AND ISSUES EVALUATED

Reclamation supports the local areas need for developing the means to meet current and future water demands. The Conjunctive Use Alternative and Auburn Dam Alternative are comprehensive programs to meet the water needs of the study area. The two alternatives are composed of many components that, if selected on a local level, would be implemented by local water purveyors. A number of the components, or facilities, are included in both alternatives and are referred to as Common Elements.

Common Elements included in all of the alternatives evaluated are being considered by the local agencies as a first step toward meeting their long-term needs. Reclamation embraces the local support for the Common Elements, with additional future component selection to be conducted by the local agencies. Implementation of the Common Elements would require cooperation between purveyors in the regional water community. Although Reclamation is a part of the regional water community, Reclamation will take no independent action on an individual component, or group of components. Reclamation participation would only be initiated through a local sponsor's request. Reclamation could then provide technical assistance or undertake a specific Federal action. If a local sponsor requests Reclamation participation, then Reclamation would first ensure that it has authority from Congress to undertake the action (i.e., a Federal role is defined, authorization exists, and the activity is funded). In accordance with, the *Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water-Related Land Resources Implementation Studies (Principles and Guidelines)*, a determination would also be made will be followed to determine whether the action was feasible from the National standpoint. A feasibility determination would typically include conducting project specific environmental analysis and a National Economic Development (NED) or similar economic analysis, pursuant to appropriate Federal statutes or new authorization.

As noted in the FEIS and final Planning Report, net economic benefits were not determined for any of the alternatives. A benefit/cost comparison was not made because the benefits quantified were incomplete. In addition, the costs of facilities were estimated at a program, rather than a project, level of detail. Economic comparisons among the alternatives were made in terms of cost effectiveness as measured by total cost per acre-foot of water. On a study area-wide basis, the costs per acre-foot of water for the Auburn Dam Alternatives featuring flood control exceed the per acre-foot cost of water for the Conjunctive Use Alternative by approximately 10 percent. At this level of detail, the per acre-foot costs for the alternatives are sufficiently close to not distinguish a finite difference.

## V. IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

If a Federal role were identified in the future due to cooperation with local agencies, the federal *Principles and Guidelines* would require that Reclamation select the NED plan as the preferred alternative unless there are overriding reasons for selecting another plan based on other Federal, State, local, and international concerns. The NED plan is defined as the plan that reasonably maximizes net economic development benefits consistent with protecting the Nation's environment.

## VI. COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE FEIS

Following the filing of the FEIS in November 1997, one comment letter was received from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA recommended in this letter that the Record of Decision state:

- that a Federal role was not identified for meeting the study area's future water needs in the ARWRI documents
- that the conjunctive use alternative be identified as the Environmentally Superior alternative
- the actions Reclamation would need to take if a future Federal role were identified
- a commitment by Reclamation that it would take no action without a local sponsor's request for Reclamation participation

Reclamation believes that all of these issues were adequately addressed in the FEIS and in related documents, including this Record of Decision.