

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
3500 INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD
WEST SACRAMENTO, CA 95691



December 21, 2020

Subject: Notification and Invitation to Consult for the California Department of Water Resources San Luis Canal Embankment and Liner Raise Project

Dear [Tribal Leader],

This letter serves as a notification and invitation to [Tribe] (the Tribe) to consult with the Department of Water Resources (DWR or Department) under the Department's Tribal Engagement Policy on the Department's proposed San Luis Canal Embankment and Liner Raise Project (Project). A letter, "Notification and Invitation to Consult for the California Department of Water Resources San Luis Canal Geotechnical Investigations Project", was also sent to you on December 21, 2020 offering consultation on the geotechnical portions of this Project.

The segment of the California Aqueduct (Aqueduct) known as the San Luis Canal is part of the San Luis Joint-Use Complex, which serves the State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project. It was designed and constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and is operated and maintained by the Department. The Department is planning to raise the existing embankment and concrete liner of the San Luis Canal to restore Pools 17, 18, 20, and 21 to their original operating capacity. The Project would also involve elevating existing structures within the Aqueduct right-of-way, such as bridge and utility pipeline crossings, turnouts/turn-ins, and Check Station 17.

The Aqueduct traverses portions of the Central Valley that have experienced land subsidence. The primary purpose of the proposed Project is to restore Aqueduct flow capacity in areas that are limited by the lack of lined freeboard due to land subsidence. The Project area is within Fresno County and Kings County and is shown on Attachment 1: Maps.

Work on the Project would include raising the earthen embankment on both sides of the Aqueduct by placing compacted fill on top of the existing embankment and down the land-side slope where necessary. The amount of fill used to raise the embankment would depend on the site-specific elevation. The maximum elevation gain of the Aqueduct embankment is anticipated to be 6 feet, and construction would extend from the top of the existing concrete liner to the edge of the existing right-of-way on both sides of the Aqueduct. In addition, access roads located on top of the Aqueduct embankment would be raised.

The concrete liner would be raised by up to 5 feet to provide a minimum of 3 feet of lined freeboard above the normal operating (or design) water surface elevation. All liner raise construction activities would be completed above the Aqueduct water level at the waterside embankment. The waterside embankment would be prepared by excavating approximately 3 to 6 feet behind the existing liner and then would be backfilled with the excavated material combined with imported material to achieve a uniform and compact embankment slope at a maximum ratio of 2H:1V.

The majority of borrow material would come from property adjacent to the Aqueduct. Borrow pits would have slopes of 3:1 or shallower, and would not be refilled. Some borrow may come from existing waste embankment (excess material outside of the roadway limits) on the east side of the Aqueduct but within right-of-way limits. The borrow material would be distributed along the length of the Aqueduct on both sides of Pools 17, 18, 20, and 21 for approximately 41 miles. Total acreage for borrow pits is approximately 829 acres. Up to 96.53 million cubic yards of material would be excavated.

Several bridges crossing the Aqueduct would need to be raised to accommodate the increase in water surface and maintain adequate clearance below the bridge decks. The approximate total area of disturbance for bridge raises is 1,260 acres. Approximately 60 miles of detour routes would be required to accommodate traffic flow during bridge closings, and may require grading and paving to support increased traffic.

Existing turnouts and turn-ins would be raised and/or modified to accommodate the embankment and liner raise in Pools 17, 18, 20 and 21. Miscellaneous overcrossing structures such as water and gas utility pipelines would be elevated or reconstructed. Drainage modifications to existing drain inlets and overflow weirs may include conversion to gated drain inlets or pumping stations. Gated drain inlets or pump stations would consist of reinforced concrete structures typical of other similar structures. Leak repairs to irrigation pipelines may extend outside of existing right-of-way limits. Repairs to leaks in irrigation pipelines would consist of grouting inside and outside of the Aqueduct. Check Station 17 would be reconstructed by using cofferdams. DWR plans to begin work on the Project in Summer of 2023, and estimates that it will take three (3) years to complete construction.

Cultural Resources work is currently in progress for portions of the Project area. A records search covering the Aqueduct right-of-way (ROW) plus a 0.25-mile buffer was conducted through the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC). One previously recorded prehistoric isolate (P-10-006343 – a mano fragment), located within a proposed borrow area, was on file at the SSJVIC. A Sacred Lands File (SLF) search covering the ROW and adjacent Project components was requested from the Native American Heritage Commission, which yielded negative results. Pedestrian surveys of the ROW and adjacent Project components are currently underway. To date, three prehistoric isolates have been recorded as part of the survey efforts for this Project (a chert biface fragment, a hammerstone, and a chert flake). Future work will include additional SSJVIC and SLF searches to capture the detour routes, additional surveys, geoaerchaeological review, and reporting.

The Department is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is proposing to prepare, along with Reclamation, the lead federal agency responsible for the Project's compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a joint CEQA/NEPA Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS). As part of the cultural resources review of the proposed Project under CEQA, we are writing to provide your Tribe with the opportunity to submit any information that you are willing to share about cultural resources that may be in close proximity to the proposed Project area shown in Attachment 1. We understand that the locations of these resources are sensitive. Resource locations will not be disclosed in public documents and will be kept confidential as provided for under California Government Code section 6254.10.

As indicated earlier, this letter also serves as an invitation to your Tribe to consult with DWR regarding the proposed Project under the Department's Tribal Engagement Policy, as guided by the Governor's Executive Order B-10-11 and N-15-19. If your Tribe would like to participate in consultation with DWR, please notify the undersigned, in writing, within 30 calendar days of receipt of this notice. Also, please provide a copy of any notification to Candace Ehringer. She can be reached by email at CEhringer@esassoc.com or by mail at 626 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1100, Los Angeles, CA 90017.

The Department is committed to working together with your Tribe consistent with its Tribal Engagement Policy and the California Natural Resources Agency's Tribal Consultation Policy, and with the Tribal Consultation Policy directives in Executive Order B-10-11 and N-15-19.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may contact Angela Calderaro at 916-717-9831, or by email at Angela.Calderaro@water.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

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