

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Corps and DWR, respectively, are initiating the NDIP Feasibility Study for a portion of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and plan to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the proposed NDIP.

Development of the Feasibility Report will be closely coordinated with development of the draft EIS/EIR, which will document existing conditions, project actions, and project effects. Responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA may include: California Department of Fish and Game; The Reclamation Board of the State of California; State Lands Commission; California Regional Water Quality Control Boards; State Water Resources Control Board; California Department of Transportation; California Department of Conservation; and California Department of Boating and Waterways.

DATES: Scoping meetings will be held on February 19, 2003, 6–8 PM, Jean Harvie Community Center, Walnut Grove, CA, and February 20, 2003, 1:30–4 PM, Bonderson Building, Sacramento, CA. If special assistance is required, please contact Gwen Knittweis (see information below) as far in advance of the workshops as possible to enable DWR to secure the needed services. If a request cannot be honored, the requestor will be notified.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions about the proposed action and EIS/EIR should be addressed to: Ms. Becky Wren, Environmental Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CESP—PD—R, 1325 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95814–2922, telephone: (916) 557–5162, e-mail address:

rebecca.wren@usace.army.mil, or Ms. Gwen Knittweis, North Delta Project Manager/Engineer, California Department of Water Resources, PO Box 942836, Sacramento, CA 94236–0001, telephone: (916) 653–2118, e-mail address: gwenk@water.ca.gov. Also, <http://ndelta.water.ca.gov> contains further project information.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. Background

A resolution adopted by the Senate Committee on Public Works on June 1, 1948, requests a review of reports submitted on the Sacramento River, California, to determine if it is advisable to modify existing projects in any way, particularly to (1) provide for the closing of Georgiana Slough and (2) eliminate tidal flow into lower Sherman Island, Frank's Tract, the area south of

Dutch Slough, and similar areas subject to tidal inundation, so that the tidal prism of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) may be reduced to a minimum.

A resolution adopted by both the Senate and House Committee on Public Works on January 31, 1961, and June 7, 1961, respectively, requests a review of Delta reports to determine the advisability of measures to preserve scenic values and to preserve and enhance recreational and related opportunities in project areas in the Delta region, consistent with the primary flood protection purposes of existing and proposed levees and channel improvements. Study authority is also contained in Section 205 of the Flood Control Act of 1950, which authorized the Secretary of the Army to make preliminary examinations and surveys for flood protection and allied purposes in the Delta.

2. Proposed Action

The Corps and DWR are conducting a study on flood control system improvements that would benefit aquatic and terrestrial habitats and alleviate flood-related problems in the North Delta. This study will result in a feasibility report.

3. Project Background

The Sacramento-San Joaquin estuary provides water for a wide range of beneficial uses, including drinking water for millions of Californians, irrigation water for millions of acres of agricultural land, an spawning and rearing habitat for aquatic organisms. The estuary also provides a permanent or seasonal home for a large variety of native plants and wildlife. Over the past several decades increase in the demand for the estuary's resources have increased conflict between the needs of water users and efforts to sustain the estuary's aquatic ecosystem and support recovery of listed fish.

The North Delta area of the estuary faces the need to balance the same issues as the larger estuary, particularly with regard to flood control and ecosystem restoration. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is the focus of complex issues involving water supply, water quality, flood control requirements, and the environment. Of particular concern to this project, runoff from the Sacramento, San Joaquin, Mokelumne, and Cosumnes rivers, as well as from the South Sacramento Stream Group (Morrison Creek, Florin Creek, Union House Creek, Elder Creek, and North Beach-Stone Lakes area) during large storm events has caused flooding in the North Delta.

Additionally, the degradation and loss of aquatic and terrestrial habitat are a primary concern in the North Delta.

The joint state-federal CALFED Bay-Delta Program (CALFED) was formed to develop and implement a long-term comprehensive plan to restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system. The CALFED Programmatic EIS/EIR (PEIS/EIR) and Programmatic Record of Decision (ROD) were issued in July and August 2000, respectively. The CALFED ROD identifies, as a component of conveyance actions, the NDIP, which is to design and construct floodway improvements in the North Delta (such as on the lower Mokelumne River and Georgiana Slough) to provide conveyance, flood control, and ecosystem benefits.

The CALFED ROD also identifies other improvements to the North Delta, including changes to the Delta Cross Channel (DCC) and an evaluation of a through-Delta facility on the Sacramento River. The NDIP will not be addressing these improvements.

4. Need for the Project

Flood control improvements are needed to reduce flood damage to land uses, infrastructure, and the Bay-Delta ecosystem resulting from overflows caused by insufficient channel capacities and catastrophic levee failures within the NDIP study area, including the Point Pleasant area. The existing and historical conditions that warrant flood control and ecosystem quality improvements are described below.

Flood Control—The Mokelumne and Cosumnes rivers and the Morrison Creek Stream group do not have sufficient channel capacity to safely convey 100-year peak flows from Sierra Nevada watersheds through the North Delta to the San Joaquin River. Channel capacities for the north and south forks of the Mokelumne River are approximately 40,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). The combined channel capacity required to safely convey flows from a 100-year flood event would be 90,000 cfs. The lack of channel capacity, combined with constrictions in vulnerable areas (e.g., bridge abutments) and an increase in sedimentation levels over time (which reduces channel capacity), makes a number of areas in the North Delta vulnerable to flooding. Since 1955, several areas have been flooded after levees were either breached or overtopped, including the Point Pleasant area, McCormack-Williamson Tract, Dead Horse Island, New Hope Tract, Brack and Canal