

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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NOTICE OF PREPARATION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR
WEST FALSE RIVER DROUGHT SALINITY BARRIER PROJECT
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Department of Water Resources (DWR) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the West False River Drought Salinity Barrier project (proposed project).

Project Location: The drought salinity barrier would be located on West False River approximately 0.4 mile east of its confluence with the San Joaquin River, in Contra Costa County between Jersey and Bradford islands, approximately 4.8 miles northeast of the City of Oakley (Figures 1 through 3). The staging area would be located on the Jersey Island levee. Embankment rock used to construct the barrier may be sourced from a commercially operated rock quarry in San Rafael, DWR's Rio Vista stockpile in Solano County, or the Weber stockpile in San Joaquin County. The proposed project may use multiple stockpile sites and off-loading sites. With the installation of the barrier, three new water quality monitoring stations would also be installed in Woodward Cut and Railroad Cut in San Joaquin County (Figure 3).

Project Description: The proposed project consists of a temporary barrier in the West False River that DWR may install up to two times between 2023 to 2032, including consecutive years, if drought conditions occur, for a period of up to 20 months. In the years where the barrier is installed, DWR would construct the barrier no sooner than April 1 and remove the barrier by November 30 of the subsequent year or the same year, when DWR determines the barrier is no longer needed based on hydrologic conditions. A barrier in West False River would be an effective tool to protect the beneficial uses of the interior Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) water by reducing saltwater intrusion while preserving the use of critically needed reservoir water. The proposed project would be constructed if DWR, in cooperation with other State and federal agencies including the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, determines that drought conditions have reduced water storage in State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP) facilities to critical levels, such that projected Delta outflow would not be sufficient to control increased salinity intrusion into the Delta, thereby worsening water quality and threatening the drinking and irrigation water supply and harming interior Delta agriculture.

The approximately 800-foot-long barrier would consist of approximately 84,000 cubic yards of well-graded 18-inch minus embankment rock extending from the Jersey Island levee on the south side of West False River to the Bradford Island levee on the north side. This is the same location where a drought salinity barrier was constructed in 2015 and 2021/22. Depending on drought conditions, if the barrier is left in a subsequent year a notch may be constructed in the middle portion of the barrier in January after the installation year to allow for fish passage and vessel navigation through West False River and the notch would be refilled as early as the first week of April.

DWR would also install three water quality monitoring stations in Woodward Cut (one monitoring station) and Railroad Cut (two monitoring stations) with the next installation of the drought salinity

barrier. The stations would be installed on three new 12-inch-diameter steel pipe piles. The stations would be left in place after removal of the drought salinity barrier.

Project Objective: The objective of the proposed project is to minimize the impacts of salinity intrusion on the beneficial uses of Delta water, consistent with *The Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) for the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region: The Sacramento River Basin and the San Joaquin River Basin* (May 2018), during persistent drought conditions.

Potential Environmental Effects: DWR as the Lead Agency will describe and analyze the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. The probable effects may include, but are not limited to: air quality from temporary increases in pollutant emissions during construction; biological resources from potential effects to special-status species or their habitat, migratory fish species, and state or federally protected wetlands during construction and presence of the barrier in West False River; potential effects to archeological and historical sites and tribal cultural resources during construction; hydrology and water quality from potential erosion, scour, siltation, and water quality effects during construction and presence of the barrier; and recreation from presence of the barrier in West False River.

Written Comments: DWR is circulating this notice to solicit the views of interested persons, organizations, and agencies regarding the scope and content of the environmental information in connection with the proposed project. 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.

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

This NOP will be circulated for a 30-day public notice period beginning Wednesday, February 23, 2022, and ending Friday, March 25, 2022. At the end of the public notice period, DWR will consider all written comments received from interested persons, organizations, and agencies in preparing the environmental analysis.

Written comments on the scope of the EIR are due no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, March 25, 2022.
Please submit your written comments via mail or email to:

California Department of Water Resources
Robert Trang, South Delta Branch
1516 9th Street, 2nd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Email address: wfrdsb_ceqa@water.ca.gov

If comments are provided via email, please include the project title in the subject line, attach comments in Microsoft Word format, if possible, and include the commenter's U.S. Postal Service mailing address.

PLEASE NOTE: All comments received will be made available for public review in their entirety in the Final EIR, including the names and addresses of the respondents. 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.

CEQA Scoping Meeting: DWR will host a virtual public scoping meeting to provide a brief presentation on the project with time for public comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 9, 2022, at 6 p.m. Please register in advance of the meeting at the following link: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_T6InxtY5Qhq9i46kmtg-6g. Registration will be open until the start of the meeting on March 9, 2022.

Ryan Reeves

2/18/2022

Ryan Reeves for:
Jacob McQuirk, PE
Branch Manager, Division of Operations and Maintenance South Delta Branch



Figure 1
Project Location

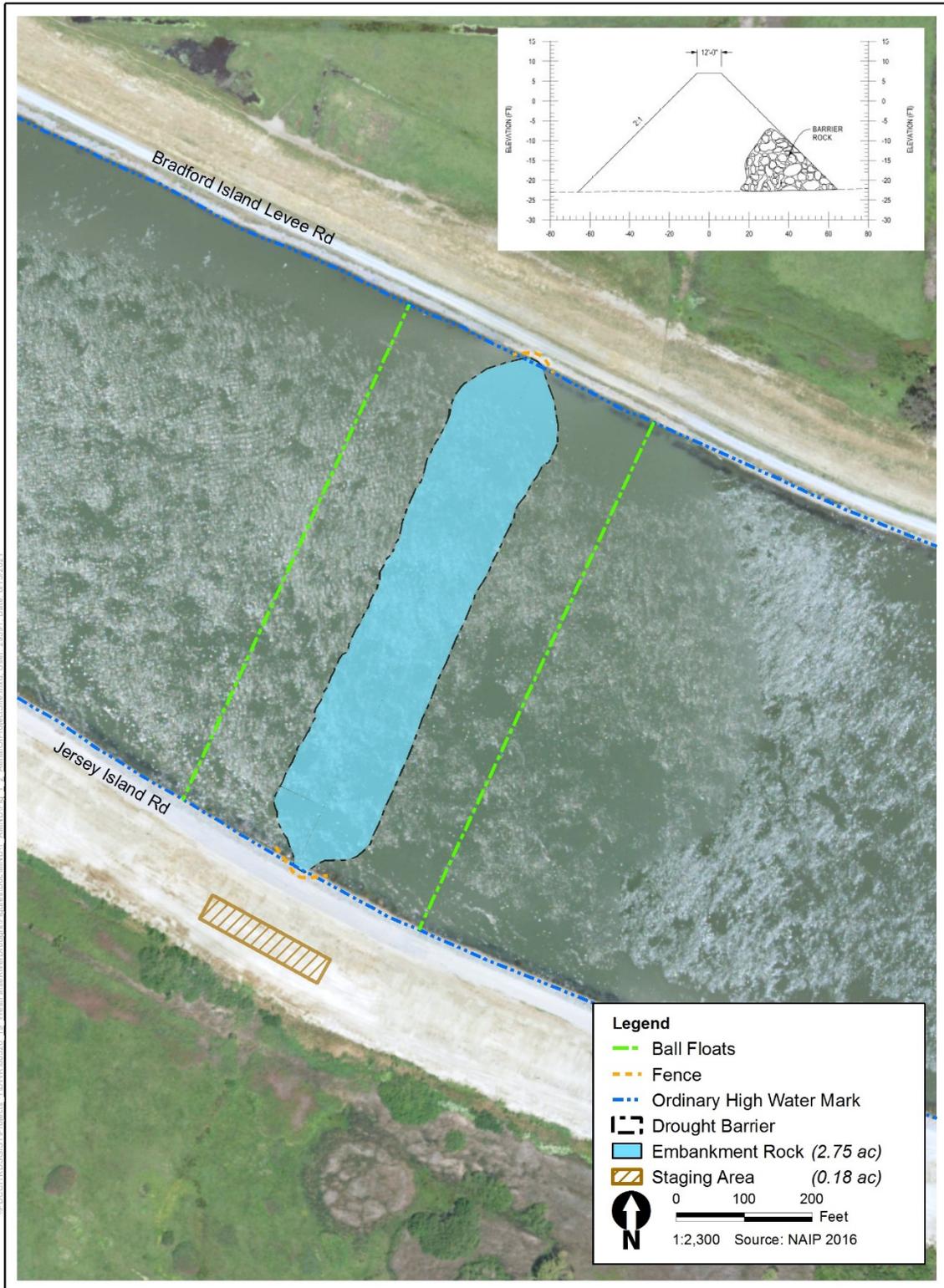


Figure 2
Aerial View of the Project Site and Project Design (without the Notch)

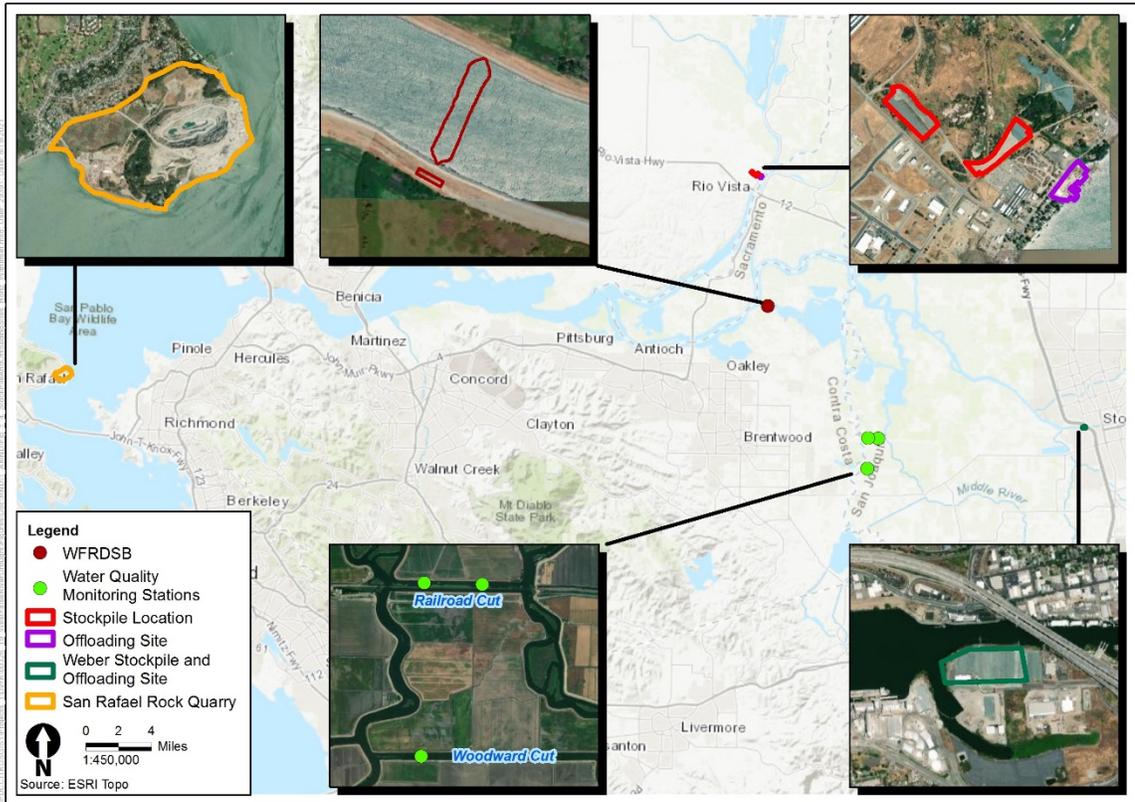


Figure 3
Project Features