



MWD

METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Executive Office



July 20, 2010

Ms. Kimberly Nicol
Program Manager
California Department of Fish and Game
78078 Country Club Drive, Suite 109
Bermuda Dunes, California 92203

Dear Ms. Nicol:

Notice of Preparation of a
Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed
Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project, Riverside and Imperial Counties, California

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) has received a copy of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Proposed Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project in Riverside and Imperial counties, California. The California Natural Resources Agency is acting as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency for this project, and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) will act on behalf of the California Natural Resources Agency to prepare the Environmental documents. The EIS/EIR will be prepared jointly by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the CDFG. The proposed project consists of constructing up to 2,400 acres of aquatic habitat configured in a series of interconnected shallow ponds within the current footprint of the Salton Sea, for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife species that are dependent on the Salton Sea. This letter contains Metropolitan's response to the NOP as a potentially affected public agency.

In its overview of the Description of the Project, the NOP states, "Rivers, which have better water quality than agricultural drain water, would provide the primary source of water for the ponds." The NOP continues to refer to unnamed "river water" and "freshwater from these rivers" to be conveyed to the constructed ponds. The identification of these rivers is eventually intimated at the bottom of page 6 of the NOP to be the Alamo, New or Whitewater rivers. The EIS/EIR should acknowledge that, rather than fresh water, water in the Alamo, New and Whitewater rivers is principally comprised of agricultural drainage. With respect to available freshwater supplies, if any, the EIS/EIR should acknowledge that water from the Colorado River is not available for direct delivery to the proposed project. The lack of available Colorado River

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supplies is documented on page 2-8 of the October 2006 *Draft Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Programmatic Environmental Report*, issued by the Natural Resources Secretary.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to your planning process and we look forward to receiving future plans and documentation for this project. If we can be of further assistance, or if you would like to discuss Metropolitan's comments on the NOP or the proposed project, please contact Mr. John L. Scott of the Water Resource Management Group at jscott@mwdh2o.com or (213) 217-7823.

Very truly yours,



John Shamma
Manager, Environmental Planning Team

WP:rdl
(Public Folders\Environmental Planning\Letters\2010\20-JUL-10A.docx)

cc: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Los Angeles District, Regulatory Division
San Diego Field Office
ATTN: CESPL-RG-SS-2010-00142-LLC
Hidden Valley Road, Suite 105
Carlsbad, California 92001