Transcript of Proceedings

Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project

Thursday, July 8, 2010

1:00 p.m.

Calipatria Inn and Suites

700 North Sorenson Avenue

Calipatria, California

Reported By:

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A P P E A R A N C E S

MODERATOR:

Rick Davis, The Davis Group

SPEAKER PANEL:

Rob Thomson, Entrix

Lanika Cervantes, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Arturo Delgado, California Department of Fish and Game

MR. DAVIS: With that, we will open it to comment or questions. Arturo, Lanika, and Rob will answer questions and fire away. Comments, questions? Okay? I'm sure there's questions.

MR. SANCHEZ: Couple questions. For the initial water to fill the ponds, is that water also coming down from the rivers?

MR. DELGADO: Right now the water sources that we're considering would be the Alamo, the New River and the Whitewater River. So that would be the primary source of water that we would use for the ponds.

MR. DAVIS: I forgot to say this at the beginning. If you tell us your name and whatever.

MR. SANCHEZ: Emmanuel Sanchez with Imperial County Air Pollution Control District. If that water was intended for the Salton Sea prior to filling the ponds, how is that going to affect the water levels at the Salton Sea?

MR. DELGADO: I'm going to -- I think Rob would probably do a better job at handling that question.

MR. THOMSON: We haven't done all of the calculations to completely document exactly what's going on. However, the slope of the land that we would be inundating with the ponds is approximately the same slope as that in the sea, so the 240 acres or whatever the

acreage turns out to be is approximately the same amount of surface area that that water would have covered in the sea.

Also, the -- you know, I don't know exactly the percentage. I would have to do some quick math to try to figure out how much of the water would be -- in the ponds would be as a percentage of the sea. It's a pretty small number though.

MR. DELGADO: We did that calculation once and it was like half of one percent, but ultimately that analysis we're going to be addressing in the environmental document. So if there's an effect from it, then we'll have to consider that, and if it's a significant impact, we would have to review that impact.

MS. SOUCIR: Monica Soucir, S-o-u-c-i-r. Just going back to that analysis real quick, you said it's going to be part of the EIR. Is it currently part of the AIS?

MR. DELGADO: The document is a joint document, so it would be part of that joint document.

MS. SOUCIR: So you mentioned the New River, Alamo. What was the other one?

MR. DELGADO: The whitewater.

MS. SOUCIR: The whitewater. Your preliminary analysis indicates that it's less than one percent

reduction in --

MR. DELGADO: If I remember correctly.

MS. SOUCIR: -- shoreline exposure?

MR. DELGADO: It's actually total water we would need for the project compared to the total volume coming in. The volume of water.

MS. SOUCIR: We're talking volume, not what affect it's going to have as far as the shoreline, not surface area.

MR. DELGADO: But that's something we will need to look at.

MR. WILCOX: Bruce Wilcox with Imperial Irrigation District. One other thing to add to that concern is there is going to be a breakdown on who is responsible for what mitigation under QSA and under other things, and I would suggest we should look at how much additional sea -- or how much additional plight exposure will be exposed sooner based on the water use out of those ponds. IID is delivering mitigation water to the sea until 2017 for mitigation for that, and we just need to make sure that we calculate what that is and how we're going to deal with the difference.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you. That's a good comment. Other comments? No more questions? Yes, Ted.

MR. FRANK: Ted Frank. Arturo, can you clarify

the layout, where the intent of the layout of the ponds is and how the water currently --

MR. DELGADO: Rob could do a better job with that.

MR. THOMSON: All preliminary, as you know. This is all part of the alternatives development which we're in the middle of, not anywhere complete and ready for publication, but the water would be diverted from the rivers and conveyed in some fashion. The fashion is either open canal or in a pipeline to the ponds, and then depending upon exactly what treatment and operational scheme one wishes to test and validate, you'll have the de-salt balance, look at selenium concentrations, look at primary productive and look at how much algae you're growing and how the rest of the food chain is doing, and eventually discharge that water probably on for balancing salt so that the salinity in the ponds stays relatively constant back into the sea. The ponds would go laterally across the current shoreline, stair-step down the sea.

MR. WILCOX: Can you show that?

MR. THOMSON: I was thinking about it, but the map won't help you much because it's the wrong scale. These are only six foot deep ponds and they're not going way out into the sea, they're going along the shore and along the shore could be -- I'm thinking Alamo north and

south, couple miles long, and then have a terminal barrier that's about six feet tall with probably a road on top and so on, and ponds would potentially increase in salinity as you moved away from the river. If you can imagine where one pond would flow into the next potentially, but the exact character and location and how they all fit together and stuff hasn't been developed. It's not done yet. It's just barely started.

MR. DELGADO: So in summary it would run -- we envision it running along the contour line minus 228, moving away from one of the rivers, where we end up siting the project. So it could be one or more rivers.

The alternative will be analyzed. Correct.

MR. WILCOX: At the other meetings, and just verify this is still on the table, of how you look at the alternatives is to locate as much as to the extent practical, so this -- so that it will help with air quality or be a barrier. In the long run this is going to be one of the -- nothing is going to be easy, one of the best ways to control some of the emissions off of there.

MR. THOMSON: Absolutely. The air quality is -- air quality management and reducing emissions from the newly exposed soils is clearly a benefit of this project and would be clearly considered in the development of the design and the environmental effects. The project's not

designed to mitigate air quality impacts. The project and the goals and objectives of the project are about fish and fish-eating birds, not air quality, but as a side benefit clearly it's going to cover up 2,000, 3,000 acres of recently exposed soil.

MR. DAVIS: Yes, sir.

MR. JOHNSON: Paul Johnson, Imperial County. Is the water flowing in right now in those rivers suitable or conducive to what you're trying to do, species you're trying to encourage?

MR. DELGADO: With the water quality of the three rivers, that's the water that we have to work with, so we just have to do our best job in trying to make it work.

MR. JOHNSON: Do you consider or do you think you might -- you'll need to pretreat the water before it gets in there?

MR. DELGADO: That's something that we're considering as an option, yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Assuming it's not the way it's supposed to be, the water is not proper for what you're trying to accomplish, do you anticipate the ponds becoming more saline over time?

MR. DELGADO: Optimize fish population so we can actually support fish and birds.

MR. JOHNSON: Do you think that putting

substandard water in these ponds in soil that is very salty is going to accomplish what you want to do without treatment?

MR. THOMSON: The treatment is not likely needed for salinity. That can be either flushed out or this isn't a necessarily -- not at all envisioned as a batched process, if you will, that you fill up the bathtub and let it stew for a while. It is likely to have a very low flow but a flow content through it in order to maintain salinity in successive ponds.

MS. SOUCIR: I have a question. Now that he's talking about salinity, is your analysis going -- I know that this is all preliminary, but are you going to be looking at the salinity content as it exists right now and its origins and then try and -- because you said you were going to do treatment for salinity or try and control salinity, so I'm assuming that you feel that it's coming from a different source other than it's there already. So are you going to analyze both?

MR. THOMSON: Let's try a little bit of hydrology and water chemistry. The influent water in the streams right now, the river salinity ranges from about something under 2,000 milligrams per liter to 5,000 milligrams per liter depending on exactly where you sample and the time of year and so forth on and so forth. The

ponds could be, as I showed in the graph, close to sea water, and so salinity will be managed and balanced by balancing inflow and outflow.

The water treatment is likely to be for sediment first, to remove sediment before it gets into the ponds so the ponds don't fill up, or you could use the first pond as your sediment capture basin if you wanted to, going down the list of water quality criteria that at least of concern to me and others is probably selenium, another salt that is in the water that's dissolved in the water that is mostly coming from upstream, way upstream in the Rockies, potentially some sources in the valleys as well, but principally from upstream, and the salinity by the way is also from well upstream by Grand Junction, Colorado.

Then there's nutrients that are going to grow algae and other -- provide a basis for the aquatic ecosystem. There would be other contaminants that might be a concern, but those are probably my first three that -- and others that we would be concerned about monitoring.

Remember, the second goal is to learn from this and be able to then develop a scheme so that should the legislature decide to build a lot of this, we have some in-place knowledge as to how to manage this problem, these kinds of facilities.

MS. SOUCIR: The reason I ask why -- it's Monica again. Because doesn't the water -- the Regional Water Quality Control Board currently have a program with the current farmers here in Imperial County where they are controlling the sediment that goes into the drain ditches?

MR. THOMSON: Bruce, you're more adept at this man I am.

MR. WILCOX: The TMDL program at this point is voluntary, but yes, there is a program. I'm not sure I understand this -- whatever -- if I understand it correctly, whatever goes into the ponds is going to discharge onto the Salton Sea, it's going to be river water anyway. I don't see an increased amount of TMDL for sediment. There aren't any -- to my knowledge any limits right now anyway.

MR. THOMSON: Discussions about nitrates. There were at one time concerns about pathogens, but those have been more or less --

MR. WILCOX: Nutrients I think is the next one. I'm not sure I'm addressing what you're asking.

MS. SOUCIR: Wondering if that's what the analysis was going to take into effect and account.

MR. THOMSON: Certainly take it into account.

MR. JOHNSON: Paul Johnson again. Do you think the treatment for sediment, do you anticipate that being

kind of a holding pond where it's settled out and mined out or scooped out?

MR. THOMSON: That's a simple way to do it. Let me make sure -- if you're familiar with the program EIR, the sediment management issue with the whole sea solution is a much more complex and much more difficult problem than the sediment issue for these ponds because the sediment, big sediment loads occur during rainy season and during high runoff events. This project can bypass all that water and not take that water where if you're trying to capture as much as possible of this water and turn it into ponds, then you have to remove it and you have to capture all or a large portion of that runoff water when there's high sediment loading. This project can go it's raining, we just don't need the input today, let the water go by and close the valve.

MR. JOHNSON: Sounds good. I guess the point of what I was trying to drive at is if you don't have pools of standing water and stagnancy. From a control standpoint, it would best reserved by water flowing through constantly with very little stagnancy developing so that keeping up vegetation and keeping the water moving to some extent is probably the best thing you can do to keep mosquitoes from breeding.

MR. THOMSON: Let's leap back to this slide. If

there are things that you can provide that help us understand a specific flow rate that help us understand what the design criteria are best to avoid effects of vectors, that would be wonderful. If we can sit down and talk to you specifically about some of the design criteria so that we can avoid things that we didn't know, that we didn't know in the development of this.

MR. JOHNSON: Probably it would be best if I gave you written comments because I'm going to have to do some research. I don't have it off the top of my head.

MR. THOMSON: It's not right now. We'll be back to you.

MR. JOHNSON: All right.

MR. THOMSON: When are we coming back? The next time we would formally be here. Are we going to be here for the draft?

MR. DELGADO: I would think so.

MR. THOMSON: Once a draft Environmental Impact Statement, Environmental Impact Report is there, and then instead of asking you for comments on the scope of the document, it would be comments on the document itself, did we hear what you said during scoping and did we modify the goals and objectives or alternatives or affects in a way that you expected us to do. Sir, you had a question.

MR. HOLING: Juan Holing (phonetic) with the

Brawley Chamber of Commerce. And looking away from all the water quality issues and so forth, the -- these are supposedly at this time experimental type ponds as I understand it. At some time if there's a build-out will there be public access or is public access being contemplated during this time period? If you're going to attract birds into their habitat and other species in there, it might be something that the local public can, actually the tourist public might --

MR. DELGADO: Put my Fish and Game hat on now. From Fish and Game's perspective, we envision some public access to the ponds. Just fishing opportunities -- we just have to kind of evaluate to determine which of those activities makes the most sense.

MR. DAVIS: Any other, anyone else have questions? Comments?

MR. THOMSON: If you think of any, please take names and addresses and provide them.

MR. DAVIS: Take one of these with you.

MR. THOMSON: In whatever media you choose.

MR. DAVIS: We've got E-mail addresses on there, regular mail address.

MR. THOMSON: And phone numbers.

MR. DAVIS: And phone. Well, no.

MR. THOMSON: Doesn't have phone numbers. Good.

We want them written.

MR. DAVIS: We have another meeting this evening in Brawley. I'm sure we'll get many of your Brawley Chamber of Commerce members there we hope, and thank you. And again, please send us your comments if you develop them and again thank you for being here today.

(Proceedings concluded at 1:49 p.m.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

I, Terri L. Emery, Certified Shorthand Reporter, in and for the State of California, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were taken before me at the time and place herein set forth; that the proceedings were reported stenographically by me and later transcribed into typewriting under my direction; that the foregoing is a true record of the proceedings taken at that time.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have subscribed my name this 16th day of July, 2010.

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Terri L. Emery, CSR No. 11598, CCR