

The Honorable Douglas P. Wheeler
Secretary for Resources
Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, California 95814

July 7, 1993

Amendment to US Corps of Engineers Public Notice 199300289 of the Sacramento District for the Construction and Operation of a Pilot Pumping Plant at the Red Bluff Diversion Dam, Tehama County

The Department of Fish and Game has reviewed the subject amendment to the Corps of Engineers Public Notice 199300289 for the construction and operation of a pilot pumping plant at the Red Bluff Diversion Dam in Tehama County. The amendment is for inclusion of channel modifications upstream of the project to provide improved sweeping flows past the intake of the pumping plant. Additionally, the construction activities described in the initial application have been changed to reposition the intake by rotating the structure nine degrees into the river.

Repositioning of the structure is not expected to affect the Sacramento River or its resources any differently than the initial design. Department comments dated January 15, 1993 (attached) on the original public notice remain valid and all of the conditions we recommended from our comments should be incorporated into any permit issued for this project.

Channel modifications suggested in the public notice include dredging, placing groins in the river to direct flow, and constricting the river with the construction of a sheet pile wall 2,000 feet long. These channel modifications all have the potential to significantly affect water quality in the Sacramento River unless proper sediment control measures are implemented. These measures include isolating the work area with berms constructed of clean gravel or sheet piling, proper disposal of the dredged materials, and minimizing operation of heavy equipment in the flowing river. Conditions 1 and 2 of our January 15, 1993 memorandum concerning Public Notice 199200864 address water quality for construction of the pilot pumping plant. These same conditions should provide adequate water quality protection for the activities described in this amended application.

Selection of Option 2 (groins) and Option 3 (construction walls) would result in construction of relatively permanent structures in the river. Inasmuch as their effectiveness in achieving the stated goal is uncertain, we prefer that the Bureau

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of Reclamation (Bureau) first pursue dredging and gate manipulation to accomplish sweeping flow velocities past the intake. Not only will this approach be less invasive but it will also allow the Bureau to obtain empirical information relevant to design and construction of the structural remedies if they become necessary. The preliminary environmental impact information regarding the groins and constricting wall is not sufficient to definitively conclude that these alternatives would be environmentally benign.

The environmental assessment for the pilot pumping plant discusses the need for improved sweeping flows past the intake. In the document the Bureau concludes:

"Channel modifications may be subject to separate environmental documentation at a later date depending on their scope and nature, as developed and as determined to be necessary, to generate adequate sweeping flow past the PPP."

If it is determined that the channel modifications are a separate Federal action and will require the preparation of separate environmental documentation, we will review and comment on the proposals at that time. If it is determined that no additional environmental documentation is needed, then we will recommend specific measures to the Bureau to achieve water quality standards and minimize construction impacts. These specific recommendations cannot be made until we receive final design specifications.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this public notice. If you have any questions you may contact Mr. Rich Elliott, Regional Manager, Department of Fish and Game, 601 Locust Street, Redding, California 96001, telephone (916) 225-2363.

Original signed by
John L. Turner

John L. Turner, Chief
Environmental Services Division

Attachment

cc: See attached list

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cc: Mr. Rich Elliott
Department of Fish and Game
Redding, California

Central Valley Regional Water
Quality Control Board
Redding, California

Mr. Jim Smith
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Red Bluff, California

Mr. Chris Mobley
National Marine Fisheries Service
Santa Rosa, California