

PROPOSITION 204 OFF-STREAM STORAGE EVALUATION ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

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My Objectives:

1. Briefly describe Environmental Studies at Potential Off-stream Storage Reservoirs
2. Introduce staff responsible for Environmental Studies
3. Provide handout with names and addresses of staff
4. Answer any questions about Environmental studies

Description of Environmental Studies:

1. Previous studies of Sites-Colusa, Thomes-Newville, and the Red Bank Projects focused on geologic and engineering considerations. Sites Reservoir was studied by the USBR in the 1960s, before the major environmental laws were passed. Thomes-Newville was studied by the USBR in the 1960s and again by DWR in the early 1980s, but the work was abruptly terminated before the necessary environmental studies were completed. The Red Bank Project was studied by DWR in the early 1990s but that effort was terminated before the environmental studies even began.
2. For these reasons, and because the CEQA, NEPA, the Clean Water Act, and the State and Federal ESAs all have passed, or been strengthened since some of the earlier studies were done, the emphasis of the current evaluation is on environmental issues, especially to identify potential impacts to threatened or endangered species that may be found in the project areas. Nearly half of the funding for the present study is devoted to environmental studies. Current environmental laws and regulations generally require selection of the least environmentally damaging projects.
3. The primary focus of the environmental studies of Off-stream Storage Projects is to inventory threatened and endangered plants and animals. That is, to identify species listed in the State or federal Endangered Species Acts, or "sensitive" species that may be listed in the near future, and are likely to be found in the potential reservoir basins.
4. Department of Fish and Game and Department of Water Resources Staff are responsible for the environmental studies at the Off-stream Storage Projects. The Department of Fish and Game is carrying out surveys to determine the presence or absence of specific fish, amphibian, reptile, and mammal species. DWR staff is carrying out surveys to inventory bird, invertebrate (primarily listed shrimp species in vernal pools), and sensitive plant species and wetland areas. DWR will also inventory archeological resources in the potential reservoir basins and evaluate the water quality of waters that would supply the potential reservoirs.

In general, these surveys require walking pre-determined transects through suitable habitat and recording or mapping the occurrence of specific species. By necessity, some of these surveys would occur at night. Stream fish are usually sampled with electrofishing gear, invertebrates and pond fish with nets. Sometimes live traps are used to collect certain species. Sensitive plants and archeological resources are noted and mapped. Wetlands protected under the Clean Water Act are mapped and the acreage of each type calculated. Water samples are collected from streams or lakes as needed and the characteristics determined by analysis in specialized laboratories.

5. The overall goal of these inventories is to identify the listed or threatened species or other resources that may be present in these potential reservoir basins so that the best overall off-stream storage project can be selected considering environmental issues as well as engineering, geologic, economic, and other factors. Proposition 204 requires that any Off-stream Storage Project provide storage and flood control benefits in an environmentally sensitive and cost-effective manner.

6. Nearly all of these surveys will require access to private lands by foot and/or vehicle. Those of you who own land in the potential reservoir areas hopefully have already been contacted by DWR Land and Right-of-Way agents for access permission. If we missed you for some reason, or if you received a letter but have not yet responded, please tell us.

7. Now, I'd like to introduce the staff responsible for the various environmental surveys:

Fish, Amphibians, and Reptiles - Charlie Brown (DFG)

Mammals - Laurie Briden (DFG) - Stockton

Birds - Dave Bogener (DWR)

Invertebrates - Fraser Sime (DWR)

Plants and Wetlands - Joyce Lacey-Rickert (DWR)

Water Quality - Gerald Boles (DWR)

Archeology - Robert Orlins (DWR) - Sacramento

Land and Right of Way - Leroy Ellinghouse (DWR) - Sacramento

8. The Northern District office has been in Red Bluff since 1965. I've been here since July 1966. Most of the people responsible for the off-stream storage evaluation work at the Red Bluff office and are available there to answer any questions you may have, or to provide additional information, or to deal with any problems that may arise. You may want to talk with them individually with respect to details of their specialties. You have a list of our names, addresses, and phone numbers. Please feel free to contact us.