

# SUMMARY

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The Department of Water Resources is proposing a Supplemental Water Purchase Program, a 6-year, short-term program designed to allow transfers of water from willing sellers to participating SWP Contractors when the Department of Water Resources is unable to meet SWP Contractors' annual entitlement requests for contracted water. The proposed program will provide for water transfers through options or direct purchase agreements. Implementation of the proposed program will depend on a variety of factors, including level of water demand, restrictions to protect endangered species, and hydrologic and reservoir storage conditions. The Department of Water Resources has prepared this Program Environmental Impact Report to address possible impacts on the environment that might occur as a result of implementing the proposed program.

Water acquired by the Supplemental Water Purchase Program would come primarily from two sources: stored surface water and groundwater substitution, whereby a portion of a water district's or farmer's water supply would be acquired and replaced by pumping an equivalent amount of local groundwater. Likely areas from which surface water might come include the Sacramento River tributaries and major tributaries of the San Joaquin River. Groundwater substitution sources would likely be from the Sacramento Valley. It is anticipated that a maximum of 200,000 acre-feet would be available from surface water sources and 200,000 acre-feet from groundwater substitution. This program would primarily use existing water production and transport facilities. No new construction of facilities is contemplated, although some minor construction (such as monitoring wells) is possible.

If a Drought Water Bank is formed and activated during the term of the proposed program, a portion of the Supplemental Water Purchase Program water would be set aside to help meet the needs of smaller entities.

Water transfers to both urban and agricultural areas are expected to reduce environmental and economic losses resulting from water shortages. Many fish species are expected to benefit from greater instream flows in source regions.

State Water Project service areas that could receive water from the proposed program could include Alameda, Solano, Napa, Santa Clara, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties. SWP service areas in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California could also receive water from this program.

The proposed program is designed to avoid significant adverse environmental impacts that would otherwise occur due to surface water purchases, groundwater substitution, and exports through the Delta. Due to the uncertainty in sources and amounts of water transferred, the Department of Water Resources has identified all potentially significant impacts and a menu of programwide mitigation measures that would be implemented to avoid or minimize significant adverse impacts to the environment (Table S-1).

The proposed program will comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including the California Water Code, Fish and Game Code, Federal and State Endangered Species acts, Clean Water Act, State Water Project permits, and agreements entered into by the Department of Water Resources. Exports through the Delta will be in accordance with objectives of the State Water Resources Control Board's 1995 Water Quality Control Plan.

Most water transfers are expected to be exported through the Delta, using SWP facilities. To the degree possible, water purchased from upstream reservoirs would be released at times for maximum benefits and minimum adverse impacts to fish. Exports through the Delta would occur only during July through October to avoid impacts to winter-run chinook salmon and delta smelt. Transfers of water from the proposed program would increase instream flows. In some areas, transfers delayed to late summer and early fall would benefit migrating adult salmon.

The 1995 biological opinions for winter-run chinook salmon and delta smelt contain operational constraints and incidental take restrictions for Delta pumping operations that result in non-jeopardy operation of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project. Any Delta water transfers associated with the Supplemental Water Purchase Program would comply with conditions in these biological opinions. In addition, the CALFED Operations Group would be monitoring operations and fish abundance during the transfers and, should problems arise with the take of listed or sensitive species, would consult informally to develop measures to avoid adverse impacts to fish. For non-listed races of chinook salmon, as well as steelhead and striped bass, the Department of Water Resources would provide mitigation in the form of funds in

accordance with Four Pumps Mitigation Program to offset direct losses.

Water release schedules for water purchased from reservoirs would be developed in consultation with reservoir operators, Department of Fish and Game, and others to avoid or minimize impacts to carryover storage, provide the most beneficial flows for aquatic resources, and minimize impacts to recreation.

Wildlife impacts resulting from purchases of stored surface water in reservoirs and groundwater substitution activities are expected to be minor or nonexistent.

The proposed program would include groundwater substitution in areas where groundwater can be extracted in lieu of taking a surface water supply. Groundwater monitoring would be conducted as part of the program and if impacts are found to be related to the proposed program, changes would be made, such as well spacing, pumping curtailment, and possibly financial compensation, to minimize significant impacts related to groundwater substitution.

Some impacts to reservoir-related recreational opportunities could occur as a result of the proposed project. Lowered water levels during peak recreation periods may decrease the capability for water-based recreation at some reservoirs. Coordinating with reservoir and concession operators to adjust drawdown periods would minimize potential impacts to recreation in reservoirs participating in this proposed program.

No impacts to land use are expected as a result of the proposed program. Since fallowing is not a part of this program, no changes are expected to normal agricultural activities. Additionally, no impacts to wetlands are expected, since water use would remain normal under the program, as would routine practices of drainage water reuse in the Sacramento Valley.

This document identifies a number of other programs and projects that could potentially have a significant cumulative impact on the environment. If implemented during the life of the proposed Supplemental Water Purchase Program, these programs, including the Interim South Delta Program, CALFED Bay/Delta Program, Monterey Agreement, and Los Vaqueros, are not expected to result in significant cumulative impacts on the environment.

A number of alternatives to the proposed program were examined for feasibility, meeting program objectives, and minimizing signifi-

cant impacts on the environment. The alternatives analyzed include: No Supplemental Water Purchase Program (No Project); Supplemental Water Purchases of Only Surface Water Supplies; Agricultural Fallowing and Crop Substitution; and Increased Water Conservation and Demand Reduction Activities. A number of other projects were identified as potential alternatives but were determined to be infeasible for implementation within the term of this proposed program.