

LO225 Shasta County WA



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January 30, 2012

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EIR Comments

Delta Stewardship Council
980 Ninth Street Suite 1500
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Subject: Delta Plan Draft EIR

Shasta County appreciates the strides the Delta Stewardship Council has made in restricting the Delta Plan ("Plan") to the Delta and Suisun Marsh. We are disappointed, however, that the Draft EIR ("EIR") largely fails to consider possible effects of the Plan to the Sacramento Valley. We believe that a Programmatic EIR should establish the outside limits of possible effects of proposed actions. As the EIR notes, the Sacramento River provides roughly three-quarters of Delta in-flow. Since the Delta Flow Criteria ("Criteria") is the only flow model considered to date, we believe the EIR should contain an examination its possible effects. LO225-1

We consider the inclusion of the area of origin statutes in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act and their recitation in the 5th Draft of the Delta Plan to be of great importance. Yet the Delta Plan and the EIR continue to exhort the State Water Resources Control Board to only consider the minimum "public trust" obligations as it moves towards establishing more rigorous flow objectives. That is not enough. As stewards of California's water rights, the State Water Resources Control Board must consider the entirety of their mandate, including Water Code sections 11460-11465, which establishes the right of watersheds of origin to meet their beneficial needs before the water is exported for use elsewhere. LO225-2

Because of the EIR's failure to do any sort of flow modeling, the State and Federal Contractors Water Agency had engineers develop the *Hydrologic Modeling Results and Estimated Potential Hydropower Effects Due to the Implementation of the Sacramento Water Resources Control Board* (HDR, et al. December 2011) ("Study"), which is conveyed to the Delta Stewardship Council under separate cover. We acknowledge the limitation of the CalSim II model, but it is our experience that the same assumptions are too common in people, too.

Under the Criteria, the Study shows that the reservoir in Shasta Lake reaches dead pool in roughly 55% of years (page 25). Dead pool means that control of the water is limited to two options: close all valves and refill the reservoir or allow free flow for any water that might come along. LO225-3

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Response to comment LO225-1

The EIR study area encompasses the regions in which each alternative could cause impacts. The three study areas used in this EIR are the Delta (including the Suisun Marsh), the Delta watershed, and areas outside of the Delta that use Delta water (Draft EIR p. 1-14; see also Water Code § 85059). Because different impacts are likely to occur in different locations, each section of the EIR specifies the study area for the impact analyzed. Please refer to Master Response 2.

Response to comment LO225-2

Neither the Delta Reform Act nor the Delta Plan affects water rights (Water Code §§ 85031, 85032(i)). Please see Master Response 5 for further discussion of the EIR's analysis of the protections for exiting water uses and users. These protections are included in all of the alternatives analyzed in the EIR. Please refer to Master Response 1 regarding the relationship between the Delta Plan and the SWRCB's consideration of flow objectives. See also Master Response 5.

Response to comment LO225-3

Please refer to the response to comment LO225-2 and to Master Response 5.

For agencies with water intakes in Shasta Lake, reaching dead pool once is once too often. Mountain Gate Community Service District serves about 2,000 people and has an intake elevation of 916'. Jones Valley County Service Area is expanding and will soon serve about 1,200 people with its intake at 802'. The City of Shasta Lake serves 10,164 with its intake at 750', Shasta Lake's dead pool elevation.

LO225-3

The study hints at poor outcomes for agencies with intakes below Shasta Dam on the Sacramento River as well. The graphs show Shasta Lake reaching dead pool early in the summer and lasting until rains return. The City of Redding, Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District and Bella Vista Water District would experience severe disruption as their intakes surfaced during the corresponding low flows during those periods. Redding and Bella Vista Water District's service areas overlap and serve a population of about 90,000. Redding might "survive" a disruption of their Pre-1914 Water Right, provided there were not similar disruptions to its Trinity River supplies and well field. Bella Vista Water District's secondary water source is from low yielding portions of the aquifer and it would be unable to deliver more than public health and safety flows. This violation of Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District's Pre-1914 Water Right would leave it unable to meet its late summer demand.

EIR Section 14.5.2, Thresholds of Significance, defines fire hazard as circumstances which "expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires." Mountain Gate Community Service District and Jones Valley County Service Area are rural lands that have experienced significant fire events in the last decade. The City of Shasta Lake is surrounded by manzanita, oak and pine woodlands: fire can easily turn from urban structure to wildland, or vice versa. Redding is similarly surrounded, and shot through with "green lines" and undeveloped areas. Fire events simultaneously become more common and more difficult to control without water, but the EIR utterly discounts people and property in these areas.

LO225-4

Section 16.4.2, Thresholds of Significance, of the EIR defines unacceptable population and housing impacts as, "displac(ing) substantial numbers of existing housing or people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere." Maybe not all of the 100,000 people adversely impacted by the Criteria would move away, but it is more than half of Shasta County's population. And anybody who leaves would need a place to live; those who really wanted to stay (provided their jobs still existed) would relocate to the southern, less developed part of the County where they could tap the relatively ample groundwater. Again, the EIR ignores its potential to redraw Shasta County's planning maps.

LO225-5

EIR Section 17.4.2, Thresholds of Significance, defines adverse service impacts as failure to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other service standards for fire, police, schools and hospitals. Fire impacts have already been noted. Police services to rural areas have been curtailed because of budget concerns in recent years, but the Criteria seem to push people to the southern, less developed part of the County, further taxing law enforcement. Similarly, school facilities are not sufficiently developed in those areas, so districts (already slashing rural bus service due to budget cuts) would be compelled to keep facilities open in areas with

LO225-6

Response to comment LO225-4

The results of the Draft Program EIR indicate that there would not be a reduction in water supplies to areas in the upper Delta watershed (please refer to Master Response 5). The EIR does not attribute changes in level of risk involving wildland fires to changes in water supply, nor does it find these effects significant.

Response to comment LO225-5

The results of the EIR indicate that there would not be a reduction in water supplies to areas in the upper Delta watershed (please refer to responses to Master Response 5). The EIR does not attribute displacement of existing housing or people to changes in water supply, nor does it find these effects significant.

Response to comment LO225-6

The results of the Draft Program EIR indicate that there would not be a reduction in water supplies to areas in the upper Delta watershed (please refer to responses to Master Response 5). The EIR does not attribute changes to levels of service to changes in water supply, nor does it find these effects significant.

unreliable water and bus students there until new facilities could be developed. But the EIR does not consider these potential service disruptions significant.

Section 18.4.2, Thresholds of Significance, of the EIR defines adverse recreation impacts as those that would, "impair, degrade or eliminate recreational facilities and activities." Shasta Lake hosts 7 marinas, numerous campgrounds, and the hotel and restaurant services associated with a major tourist draw. A study in 1997 (CH2MHill) looked at Shasta Lake drought operations. The most extreme scenario considered had the surface elevation at 916', and corresponded to a 46% decline in the value of recreation. Even allowing for an increase in land available for off-road vehicles, water at the 750' elevation would clearly result in more than a 50% decrease in value. And that only considers the Lake: fishing, camping and other activities on the Sacramento River below the dam are excluded. Yet the EIR does not consider the possibility of the Criteria destroying recreation industry in central Shasta County significant.

Others will comment on lost hydroelectric potential and its effects on greenhouse gases; the simplistic conclusion that lost surface water will be somehow made up without significant water quality degradation or groundwater depletion; the obvious effects of so drastic a flow regime on fisheries and other flora and fauna; and the Plan's potentially crushing effect to forestry and agriculture. In short, the EIR falls woefully short of any kind of thoughtful consideration of anything outside of the Delta.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Minturn, Chief Engineer

By 
Eric B. Wedemeyer, Supervising Engineer

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LO225-6
LO225-7
LO225-8

Response to comment LO225-7

In response to this comment, please see text change(s) in Section 5 in this FEIR.

Response to comment LO225-8

Please refer to Master Response 5.