Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Notice of Availability of the Interlake Tunnel and Spillway Modification Project
Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

Location: Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs in Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties, California

Purpose of the Notice: The Monterey County Water Resources Agency is circulating for public review and comment a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Draft EIR has been prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is being circulated for public review and comment in accordance with Section 15088.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

The proposed project's purpose is to develop a multi-benefit project for the Salinas River Basin that improves the sustainability of the water supply, water quality, and flood management for the basin. The proposed project is intended to meet the following objectives:

- Minimize flood control releases through the Nacimiento Dam Spillway and reduce associated downstream flood damage.
- Increase the overall surface water supply available from Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs by maximizing the opportunity for water to be collectively stored in the reservoirs.
- Improve the hydrologic balance of the groundwater basin in the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin) and reduce seawater intrusion.
- Continue to meet downstream environmental flow requirements for south-central California coast steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*).
- Minimize the impact on existing hydroelectric production.
- Preserve recreational opportunities in the reservoirs.
- Protect agricultural viability and prime agricultural land.

Lead Agency: The Monterey County Water Resources Agency is the lead agency under CEQA.

Description of the Project: The proposed project consists of the construction and operation of an approximately 2-mile long underground water conveyance tunnel (the Interlake Tunnel) that would connect Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs and allow water to flow by gravity from Nacimiento Reservoir to San Antonio Reservoir. Project features would include a Tunnel Intake Structure, an Energy Dissipation Structure, and water flow control devices. The Tunnel Intake Structure would include numerous features and systems to ensure optimum operational efficiency and safety, including a debris boom and fish screens to prevent migration of debris and fish from Nacimiento Reservoir to San Antonio Reservoir. The Interlake Tunnel would include security features to prevent unauthorized access or vandalism. Electrical power would be required temporarily during construction of the Energy Dissipation Structure and Interlake Tunnel, and operations would require electrical power service at the Tunnel Intake Structure, which would be provided by a new underground utility line at Nacimiento Reservoir. A control building for utilities would also be constructed at the Tunnel Intake Structure.

The proposed project would also include modifications to the existing spillway at San Antonio Reservoir to allow an increase in reservoir storage capacity. The modification would involve demolition and replacement of the spillway control structure with a new spillway structure with a different design and new spillway walls. Some existing dirt roads would be graded and resurfaced to allow access for construction equipment. The Draft EIR also evaluates a Tunnel-Only Alternative that does not include modifications to the San Antonio Reservoir spillway.

The proposed project would not be located on or directly affect reported hazardous materials sites as specified under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

Significant Environmental Effects: The Draft EIR determined that impacts from construction and operation of the proposed project or Tunnel-Only Alternative would be less than significant or less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures. No significant and unavoidable impacts would occur from construction and operation of the proposed project or Tunnel-Only Alternative.

Availability of the Draft EIR: The Draft EIR and all attachments are available on MCWRA's website: https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/government-links/water-resources-agency/projects-facilities/interlake-tunnel

The Draft EIR is also available for review at the following locations:

- Monterey County Water Resources Agency, 1441 Schilling Place, North Building, Salinas, CA 93901
- Paso Robles City Library, 1000 Spring Street, Paso Robles, CA 93446

Public Review Period: The Draft EIR will be available for a 49-day public review from January 20, 2023 to March 10, 2023. Please submit written comments on the Draft EIR by 5 p.m. PST March 10, 2023 via email at tunnelEIR@co.monterey.ca.us, at the public meetings described below, or via U.S. mail to: Alex Henson, Associate Water Resources Engineer, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, 1441 Schilling Place, North Building, Salinas, CA 93901.

The submittal of written comments by email would be greatly appreciated (attached documents in Microsoft Word or PDF format are encouraged). Written comments received in response to this Draft EIR during the public review period will be addressed in the Final EIR response-to-comments section.

Public Meetings: Two public meetings will be held to present the Project and associated findings of the Draft EIR, and receive written comments from individuals and organizations on the Draft EIR. Live webinars of both meetings will also be available as follows:

- February 1, 2023, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Bradley Elementary School, 65600 Dixie Street, Bradley, CA
  Webinar: https://montereycty.zoom.us/j/94949490094?pwd=S3gzbXRjL04yUExDS2s0bGJsQkx5dz09
  Passcode = 714405; Meeting ID = 949 4949 0094; Phone = +1 669 900 6833 US
- February 2, 2023, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Greenfield City Council Chambers, 599 El Camino Real, Greenfield, CA
  Webinar:
  https://montereycty.zoom.us/j/99823161437?pwd=NXBkNGJDaHRIWGNGTWZNMGd2eUJGQT09
  Passcode = 185485; Meeting ID = 998 2316 1437; Phone = +1 669 900 6833 US

For individuals requesting reasonable accommodations, please contact Alex Henson at (831) 755-4874.