

Fact Sheet

Interlake Tunnel and Spillway Modification Project Draft Environmental Impact Report

What is the Interlake Tunnel 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.

What is the purpose of the Draft EIR?

An EIR is an informational document that must be considered before approval or disapproval of a project. It is intended to provide public agency decision makers and the public in general with detailed information about the effect which a proposed project is likely to have on the environment; it lists ways in which the significant effects of such a project might be minimized; and it indicates feasible alternatives to such a project. The purpose of the Draft EIR is to evaluate and disclose the potential environmental effects from construction and operation of the project and to provide agencies and interested individuals with the opportunity to provide substantive comments on the information presented in the Draft EIR.

Where can I review the Draft EIR?

The Draft EIR is available for public review from January 20, 2023 to March 10, 2023. The Draft EIR can be downloaded from MCWRA's website: <https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/government-links/water-resources-agency/projects-facilities/interlake-tunnel>

The Draft EIR can also be viewed in person at:

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

How can I comment on the Draft EIR?

Please submit written comments on the Draft EIR by 5 p.m. PST March 10, 2023 via one of the following methods:

- Email tunnelEIR@co.monterey.ca.us
- Provide a written comment card at one of the public meetings
- Mail a written comment to:

Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Alex Henson, Associate Water Resources Engineer
1441 Schilling Place, North Building, Salinas, CA 93901.



What are the anticipated environmental effects of the project?

Construction of the proposed project would result in:

- the potential for soil erosion
- the potential to disturb or otherwise damage paleontological resources
- temporary and permanent impacts on plant and wildlife habitat through direct conversion and indirect effects (such as water quality impacts and noise)
- potential to disturb or damage archaeological resources, human remains, or tribal cultural resources
- potential for accidental release of small amounts of hazardous materials
- release of air contaminants and greenhouse gases

Operation of the proposed project could result in:

- periodic changes in flood hazard conditions and altered erosion and siltation conditions
- periodic impacts on plant and wildlife habitat through increased inundation at San Antonio Reservoir and changes in releases downstream of the reservoirs
- potential to disturb or damage archaeological resources, human remains, or tribal cultural resources through periodic inundation at San Antonio Reservoir
- potential to interfere with vehicle movement and emergency response along local roadways during periodic inundation at San Antonio Reservoir
- reduced electrical energy production from the existing hydroelectric facility at Nacimiento Reservoir
- impacts to prime agricultural farmland due to infrequent changes in flood conditions and altered erosion and siltation

Mitigation has been identified to reduce these potential impacts to less-than-significant levels

What are the anticipated benefits of the project?

- increase the overall surface-water supply available from Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs by maximizing the opportunity for water to be collectively stored at the reservoirs
- would minimize releases from the Nacimiento Reservoir spillway
- reduce associated downstream flood damage
- increase groundwater supplies and recharge
- improve the hydrologic balance of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin
- protect agricultural viability and prime agricultural land
- reduce seawater intrusion
- enhance recreational opportunities at San Antonio Reservoir
- enhance fish productivity in San Antonio Reservoir
- enhance adult steelhead migration in Salinas River downstream of Soledad
- enhance juvenile steelhead rearing habitat in Nacimiento and San Antonio Rivers from increased summer flows
- increase resident fish populations (including special-status species, such as Monterey roach and Monterey hitch) from increases in summer flows
- increase tidewater goby populations, especially spawning adults
- increase steelhead smolts in the Nacimiento River and Salinas River reaches upstream of Soledad and steelhead smolts migrating through the lagoon

