

Notice of Preparation

Modesto Irrigation District

Comprehensive Water Resources

Management Plan Programmatic EIR

The Modesto Irrigation District (MID), located in the northern portion of the San Joaquin Valley in Stanislaus County (Figure 1), conducted an evaluation of its water resources, on-farm systems, land use patterns and projections, infrastructure, and finances. As a result of this assessment, MID has developed and intends to implement an integrated and forward-looking Water Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan (Proposed Program) to address MID’s long-term customer and water management goals, and the specific infrastructure and operational needs throughout the MID irrigation conveyance system. The Proposed Program includes approximately 100 individual projects, which are distributed within MID irrigation district boundaries and support MID’s goals through approximately 2040. Executing the Proposed Program over the next decades will allow MID to continue providing a high-level of service to meet customer’s evolving water delivery needs and increase operational reliability. The projects in the Proposed Program can be divided into the following 12 categories:

- Drain/Reclamation
- Flow Control and Measurement Structures
- Groundwater Management
- Irrigation Service Turnout Measurement
- Lateral Rehabilitation
- Main Canals and Tunnels Improvements
- Miscellaneous In-System Improvements
- Outflow Management
- Pipeline Replacement
- Regulating Reservoirs and Infrastructure
- Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA)
- Stormwater Management

Because the Proposed Program includes a number of individual projects that could have environmental impacts and will be implemented in phases, a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) as referenced in Section 15168 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Guidelines) is being prepared. The PEIR will provide programmatic evaluation of the Proposed Program and will facilitate future implementation of individual projects including those that are not anticipated to require additional project-level environmental review. As per CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(b), MID intends to use the PEIR for the following purposes:

- Provide a vehicle for a more comprehensive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on an individual action.
- Ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be overlooked in a case-by-case analysis.
- Avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations.
- Allow MID to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early stage of the planning process when MID has greater flexibility to address basic environmental issues or cumulative impacts.

- Reduce administrative tasks associated with potential projects contemplated in the Proposed Program.

Draft Goals and Objectives

MID recognizes the need for significant investment in its irrigation infrastructure and has developed the Proposed Program to ensure the MID mission is maintained. The Proposed Program will allow MID to:

- Provide a high-level of customer service and meet customer's evolving water delivery needs;
- Ensure compliance with the Water Conservation Act of 2009 (Senate Bill [SB] x7-7); and
- Implement irrigation infrastructure improvements for the stewardship of MID's water resources and increasing operational reliability.

Alternatives

The PEIR will evaluate the No Program Alternative and Proposed Program Alternative. Under the No Program Alternative, present practices are assumed to continue. It is assumed under this alternative that MID would maintain the existing level of service to its customers, only invest in projects to address major service liabilities, and only provide the minimum resources needed to comply with SB x7-7. The No Program Alternative would meet the CEQA requirement of an analysis of a "No Project" alternative in which the Proposed Program is not implemented. The No Program Alternative allows decision-makers to use the PEIR to compare the impacts of approving the Proposed Program with the future conditions of not approving the Program. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, subdivision (e)(2), indicates that the No Project (Program) Alternative should include reasonably foreseeable changes in existing conditions and changes that would be reasonably expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project (or program) was not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.

Other alternatives that may be raised during the scoping process will be evaluated for feasibility and included in the PEIR as determined appropriate or necessary.

Impact Analysis

The PEIR will evaluate and disclose the potential impacts associated with implementing the projects included in the Proposed Program. Where significant potential impacts are identified, appropriate mitigation measures will be incorporated in coordination with MID. The PEIR will support the preparation of subsequent environmental documents and/or various permit applications as determined to be necessary in cooperation with MID.

Impacts associated with the implementation of the projects included in the Proposed Program will be evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively, as appropriate. Potential effects, such as temporary and/or permanent impacts to terrestrial wildlife, will be evaluated through field surveys and known presence. Where final project locations are not yet known, and will be determined in the future, impact avoidance criteria will be developed and disclosed to support future project/program implementation and minimize potential impacts.

A public draft PEIR is expected to be completed in early 2019.

Scoping Meeting

A public scoping meeting on the Proposed Program and CEQA process to receive public input will be held Tuesday, October 2, 2018 at 9:00 am in the Board Room at the MID Main Office. The MID office is located at 1231 11th Street, Modesto, California 95354. Scoping comments from interested parties will be accepted for 60 days from the date the Notice of Preparation is filed with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. Scoping comments can be submitted in-person at the public scoping meeting or by mail to:

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