

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX Southern California Field Office
600 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 1460
Los Angeles, CA 90017

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE CITY OF BIG BEAR LAKE WATER SYSTEM CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

This Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (EA/FONSI) evaluates the environmental effects of the proposed Big Bear Lake Water System Capital improvement programs. The proposed project consists of the construction and installation of a combination of new wells and conveyance facilities consisting of new and replacement transmission and distribution system pipelines. The Department intends to drill and/or equip a total of six wells within the Big Bear Lake, Moonridge, and Fawnskin areas. The proposed project also includes the installation of approximately 37,121 linear feet of pipeline throughout the Department's service area.

The proposed project includes the testing, development and equipping of six water production wells within the Department's Big Bear Lake/Moonridge and Fawnskin water systems. The drilling and development of each production well will take approximately 3 to 4 weeks. The area around the well sites will be disturbed to the least extent possible (typically 100' x 100') and, after the well installation is completed, the temporarily disturbed areas will be returned to present conditions. The wells will be drilled using the fluid reverse circulation rotary drilling method and will require at least two separate drilling passes. A submersible pump will be located inside the wells when completed. The wells will be enclosed in a 15-foot by 20-foot wood frame building designed and painted to blend with the surrounding buildings.

Additionally, the proposed project includes the installation of approximately 37,121 linear feet of water distribution pipeline. The proposed pipelines will range in size from 8 to 12-inches in diameter. The pipeline will be installed by opening a trench about 60-inches wide and up to 10-feet deep along the proposed alignments; installing the new water pipeline; and then closing the trench, including compacting the soil cover to meet compaction requirements needed to protect the pipeline. Construction equipment required for pipe installation would include, but not be limited to the following: two excavators, two loaders, one crane, one dozer, one air compressor, one welder, one water pump, one water truck, and one generator. The estimated number of construction personnel present at any given time is 12. The estimated length of pipeline to be installed each day is 300 feet per team. Two teams laying pipeline at the same time would install 600 feet per day which equates to about 80 days of construction. At this time it is not clear whether all of the pipe would be installed in sequence (about 4 months), or whether pipeline installation would be spread out over a longer period.

The Department's service area affected by this proposed action is located generally in the Bear Valley area within the San Bernardino Mountains in San Bernardino County. The Bear Valley area includes approximately 135 square miles of unincorporated area surrounding the City of Big Bear Lake. The area is entirely surrounded by the San Bernardino National Forest. The Big Bear community is located in an approximate 12-mile long valley with an average elevation of 7,200

feet above sea level. The Valley is surrounded by mountain ridges and rugged slopes. Land surface elevations range from 6,000 to 9,900 feet. The elevation of Big Bear Lake itself is 6,740 feet. Big Bear Lake has a surface area of approximately 10 square miles and 23 miles of shoreline.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES AND CONDITIONS

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§4321–4370f; Council of Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 CFR §§1500.1–1508.28; and EPA NEPA regulations, 40 CFR Part 6, EPA has completed an EA as a cooperating agency with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the lead agency that examines the potential environmental impacts and include a no action alternatives to the proposed project. The only alternative given full consideration is the no project alternative. Alternative alignments and a reduced amount of new or replacement water infrastructure were considered but not given full consideration because they would not meet project objectives or reduce potential environmental effects relative to the proposed project. After carefully considering the regulatory, environmental (both natural and human) and socio-economic factors, the EA did not identify any significant impacts to the environment that would result from the implementation of this project.

The following mitigation measures will be incorporated into this project.

- Night lighting will be located and shielded so as to avoid creating a nuisance to nearby sensitive light receptors, such as residences. Light from night lighting shall not spill off the site onto adjacent occupied structures or light sensitive uses.
- The Department will conduct archaeological monitoring of trenching activities in portions of the APE in the Woodlands neighborhood near Erwin Lake and in the Mount Whitney Drive and Division Driver area at the eastern end of Big Bear Lake. A qualified professional shall conduct the monitoring and a report of findings, including any management actions required to protect any exposed subsurface resources, shall be completed and submitted to the Department.
- If cultural resources (historic, pre-historic or paleontological) are discovered during project construction, all work in the area of the find shall cease, and a qualified professional retained by the Airport shall investigate the find and make recommendations on the disposition of any buried resources. This shall include assessing the value of objects, determining whether the resource deserves curation, and preparing and implementing a curation plan to protect such resources. The qualified professional shall compile a report of findings and make it available to peers for review and use of the information.
- If human remains are accidentally exposed during construction activities, all work shall cease in the area of discovery and the San Bernardino county Coroner's Office shall be contacted pursuant to procedures set forth in Section 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code. Any discoveries of Native American human remains will be address under the procedures in PRC Section 5097.98 et al.
- Within 30-days prior to the onset of ground disturbing activities at the Division Well No. 8 (BBM 21), and Cherokee Well (FS 5) work sites, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction clearance survey for herpetofauna including Southern rubber boas and/or San Bernardino Mountain king snakes. In the event

a rubber boa and/or king snake has migrated onto the site the appropriate regulatory agency shall be contacted and avoidance measures shall be developed prior to the commencement of work. Large diameter snags shall be left in place or placed strategically to act a barrier into the work zone.

- Any removal of vegetation should be conducted outside of the nesting season for migratory birds (roughly April-September) covered under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, or pre- construction nesting bird surveys should be conducted by a qualified biologist.
- Trenching and excavation for the pipelines should be limited to the minimum width practicable, and trenches should be covered at night to minimize injury/stranding of wildlife.
- The construction contractor will provide adequate traffic management resources, such as protective devices, flag persons, and police assistance for traffic control, to maintain safe traffic flow on local streets affected by facility and pipeline construction at all times.
- The construction contractor will identify traffic hazards created by construction, such as rough road or potholes, freshly paved locations, and minimize total traffic and vehicle speed through such hazards.
- The construction contractor will ensure that traffic safety hazards, such as uncovered or unfilled open trenches, will not be left in roadways during period of time when construction personnel are not present, such as nighttime and weekends.
- The construction contractor will repair all roads adequately after construction to ensure that traffic can move in the same manner as before construction.
- At all times during construction, the contractor will ensure that emergency fire, police or medical vehicles are able to access all adjacent areas. Additionally, construction equipment or activities must not obstruct or hinder traffic that might be generated during an evacuation.
- The Department will require the implementation of adequate measures to reduce noise levels to the greatest extent feasible, including portable noise barriers or scheduling specific construction activities to avoid conflict with adjacent sensitive receptors.
- The Department will require that all construction equipment be operated with mandated noise control equipment (mufflers or silencers). Enforcement will be accomplished by random field inspections by applicant personnel during construction activities.
- The Department will establish a noise complaint/response program and will respond to any noise complaints received for this project by measuring noise levels at the affected receptor. If the noise level exceeds an Ldn of 65 dBA exterior or an Ldn of 45 dBA interior at the receptor, the applicant will implement adequate measures to reduce noise levels to the greatest extent feasible,

including portable noise barriers or scheduling specific construction activities to avoid conflict with adjacent sensitive receptors.

- Pipeline construction shall be restricted to daylight hours, unless an emergency exists.
- Stored backfill material shall be covered with water resistant material during periods of heavy precipitation to reduce the potential for rainfall erosion of stored backfill material. If covering is not feasible, then measures such as the use of straw bales or sand bags shall be used to capture and hold eroded material on the project site for future cleanup.
- Excavated areas shall be properly backfilled and compacted. Paved areas disturbed by this project will be repaved in such a manner that roadways and other disturbed areas are returned to as near the pre-project condition as is feasible.
- All exposed, disturbed soil (trenches, stored backfill, etc.) will be sprayed with water or soil binders twice a day or more frequently if fugitive dust is observed migrating from the site within which the water facilities are being installed.
- The length of trench which can be left open at any given time will be limited to that needed to reasonable perform construction activities. This will serve to reduce the amount of backfill stored onsite at any given time.
- The Department shall identify best management practices (BMPs) to ensure that the discharge of the groundwater pumped to the surface by the proposed wells do not cause erosion downstream of the discharge point. This shall be accomplished by reducing the energy of any site discharge through an artificial energy dissipator or equivalent device. If any substantial erosion or sedimentation occurs as a result of discharging groundwater from the project well, any erosion or sedimentation damage shall be restored to pre-discharge conditions.
- Before determining that an area contaminated as a result of an accidental release is fully remediated, specific thresholds of acceptable clean-up shall be established and sufficient samples shall be taken within the contaminated area to verify that these clean-up thresholds have been met.
- During construction activities within existing road rights-of-way or other areas where continuous access is required, a road operation management plan shall be prepared and implemented. At a minimum this plan shall define how to minimize the amount of time spent on construction activities; how to minimize disruption of vehicle and alternative modes of traffic at all times, but particularly during periods of high traffic volumes; adequate signage and other controls, including flagpersons, to ensure that traffic can flow adequately during construction; the identification of alternative routes that can meet the traffic flow requirements of a specific area, including communication (signs, webpages, etc.) with drivers and neighborhoods where construction activities will occur; and at the end of each construction day roadways shall be prepared for continued utilization without any significant roadway hazards remaining. This plan shall be

submitted to local jurisdiction for review and comment prior to initiating construction within a given area.

- Prior to initiating construction of the proposed project, the Department shall submit and have approved a fire or medical emergency response access plan that meets each affected jurisdiction's response time frame. Success for this measure will be determined by the local fire agency approving and verifying that the specific access response plan and measures will allow them to continue meeting their emergency response time frame objectives.
- Prior to initiating construction of the proposed project, the Department shall submit and have approved a police emergency response access plan that meets each affected jurisdiction's response time frame. Success for this measure will be determined by the local law enforcement agency approving and verifying that the specific access response plan and measures will allow them to continue meeting their emergency response time frame objectives.
- Prior to initiating construction of the proposed project, the Department shall submit and have approved an access control plan to its staging and equipment storage areas that meets each affected jurisdiction's crime minimization standards. Success for this measure will be determined by the local law enforcement agency approving and verifying that the access control plan and measures will minimize trespass and theft activities in accordance with local requirements.
- If the construction contractor encounters contaminated soil (discolored or odiferous), the Department shall have on call an industrial hygiene firm to evaluate and determine a course of action to remediate the contamination or to close in place after the new water facility is installed. Regulatory agencies shall be notified of the contamination and shall participate in defining the method of remediation, including overseeing any remediation or site closure. If a well encounters contamination, the Department shall decide whether to close the well and notify the regulatory agencies, or to pump and treat the contaminated well to meet current potable water quality requirements. Success for this measure will be determined by the Department, industrial hygiene professional and regulatory agencies that any exposed contamination will not cause public health hazards when construction is completed.
- Prior to initiating relocation of any utility system located within the pipeline alignments, the Department will notify the pertinent utility of the construction plans. The Department shall submit sufficient engineering data to verify that remaining utility systems will function as effectively after relocation as it does before relocation.
- Where available and permitted, the construction contractor shall utilize recycled water to control fugitive dust. The contractor shall make a positive demonstration to the Department that such recycled water is or is not available prior to initiating ground disturbing activities requiring fugitive dust control.

- Approving and verifying the traffic management and access control plan and measures will minimize trespass and theft activities in accordance with local requirements.

PUBLIC REVIEW

The EA and unsigned FONSI are available for public review at the EPA Southern California Field Office in Los Angeles, CA. In addition, the EA will be posted on the EPA website at <http://www.epa.gov/region09/nepa/epa-generated.html>.

The EA is also available for public review at the following locations:

USDA RUS
City of Indio
82901 Bliss Avenue
Indio, Ca 92201

Big Bear Department of Water and Power
41972 Garstin Drive
Big Bear Lake, CA 92315

To obtain additional information about the project, please contact Howard Kahan by e-mail at: kahan.howard@epa.gov or by calling (213)-244-1819. All interested persons may submit comments to EPA Region 9 by April 22, 2010. No administrative action will be taken on this proposed project prior to the expiration of the comment period. Comments, via letter, fax or e-mail, should be sent to Howard Kahan at the address listed below.

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After EPA assesses any comments received, those comments, EPA's responses, and this FONSI will be forwarded to the Region 9 Water Division Director for signature. If this FONSI is signed by the Water Division Director, it will not be re-circulated for review, but will be available to any individual upon request.

FINDING

After review of the EA and any comments received, EPA will determine if the proposed project will have a significant impact on the environment and whether an Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared for this project.

Alexis Strauss
Director, Water Division

Date