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*Secretary for
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State Water Resources Control Board

Division of Water Rights
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Gray Davis
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August 8, 2003

To: Cachuma Hearing Service List & General Mailing List

RELEASE OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT PREPARED IN CONNECTION WITH CONSIDERATION OF MODIFICATIONS TO THE U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION'S WATER RIGHT PERMITS 11308 AND 11310 (APPLICATIONS 11331 AND 11332) TO PROTECT PUBLIC TRUST VALUES AND DOWNSTREAM WATER RIGHTS ON THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER BELOW BRADBURY DAM (CACHUMA RESERVOIR)

The subject draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is available for public review. The project analyzed in the draft EIR consists of potential modifications to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) water right permits for the Cachuma Project in order to provide appropriate protection of downstream water rights and public trust resources on the Santa Ynez River. The Cachuma Project includes Bradbury Dam, which impounds water on the Santa Ynez River in northern Santa Barbara County, forming Cachuma Lake. The Cachuma Project provides water to the Cachuma Project Member Units for irrigation, domestic, municipal and industrial uses. The Member Units consist of the City of Santa Barbara, Goleta Water District, Montecito Water District, Carpinteria Valley Water District, and the Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District -- Improvement District #1.

In 1994, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) issued Order WR 94-5. The order set a deadline of December 1, 2000 to commence a hearing on the issue whether Reclamation's water right permits should be modified to protect downstream users with senior rights to surface water and to maintain percolation of water from the Santa Ynez River for purposes of groundwater recharge. On September 25, 2000, the SWRCB issued public notice of a hearing to consider this issue. The SWRCB will also consider whether to modify Reclamation's permits to protect public trust resources, including steelhead trout, which were listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1997. The SWRCB conducted Phase 1 of the hearing on November 6, 2000. Phase 2 will be conducted on October 21, 2003, and continue if necessary on October 22 and October 23. The SWRCB will evaluate the draft EIR along with other evidence admitted during the hearing in the preparation of a water right order that addresses whether to modify Reclamation's permits.

The draft EIR finds that one of the alternatives analyzed (Alternative 3A), which entails increased releases for fishery resources, could result in a shortage in the Member Units' water supply in critical drought years. This could result in a significant, indirect environmental impact if the Member Units make up for the shortage by increasing groundwater pumping, implementing a temporary water transfer, or desalinating seawater. The draft EIR also finds that the remaining alternatives (Alternatives 3B, 3C, 4A, and 4B), which entail raising Bradbury Dam to create additional storage capacity, could have significant environmental impacts to oak trees, recreational facilities, and

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cultural resources at Lake Cachuma. Finally, the draft EIR identifies significant environmental impacts to vegetation, wildlife, and cultural resources in connection with State Water Project delivery facilities that would be constructed under Alternatives 4A and 4B.

A copy of the draft EIR is being provided on compact disk to the parties to the SWRCB hearing under cover of this letter. Copies are also available upon request and may be obtained by calling Andrew Fecko at (916) 341-5393. Copies on compact disk are available free of charge. Hard copies are available for the cost of reproduction. Copies of the draft EIR and documents referenced in the draft EIR are available for public review from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday in the Records Unit for the SWRCB, Division of Water Rights (Division), which is located on the Second Floor of the Joe Serna Jr./Cal/EPA Headquarters Building, 1001 I Street, Sacramento, California. A copy of the draft EIR also will be posted on the Division's website at <http://www.waterrights.ca.gov>.

Comments on the draft EIR must be received by 5:00 p.m. on October 7, 2003. Comments should be addressed to:

Mr. Andrew Fecko
Division of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Comments may be hand delivered to the same addressee at 1001 I Street, Second Floor, Division of Water Rights - Records Unit during the office hours referenced above.

If you have any questions regarding the draft EIR, they can be directed to Mr. Fecko at (916) 341-5393.

Sincerely,

Victoria A. Whitney, Assistant Chief
Division of Water Rights

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Andy Fecko
Ms. Cathy Nease
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