

**COMMENT LETTER 3 - U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DON L. NEUBACHER (OCTOBER 7, 1996), RECEIVED OCTOBER 7, 1996**

**Response to Comment 3-1**

*Comment Summary: The comment provides a description of the lands that are administered by the National Park Service within the Tomales Bay watershed.*

The EIR/EIS authors appreciate the information provided in the comment. The Draft EIR/EIS does not contain a description of the Park Service lands in Tomales Bay because the Project will not affect any of the resources in Tomales Bay. Refer to Responses to Comments 3-5 and 3-6.

**Response to Comment 3-2**

*Comment Summary: The comment provides a brief description of the natural resources of Tomales Bay and expresses concern about the long-term health of the Bay.*

The Project will not affect the natural resources of Tomales Bay. Refer to Responses to Comments 3-5 and 3-6.

**Response to Comment 3-3**

*Comment Summary: The comment states that the Point Reyes National Seashore staff has reviewed the Draft EIR/EIS and is extremely concerned about the West County Alternatives.*

The Draft EIR/EIS concludes that the West County Alternative will not affect resources in Tomales Bay. Specific comments are addressed below.

**Response to Comment 3-4**

*Comment Summary: The comment states an opinion that the West County Alternatives will have direct long-term impacts on the recreational resources of Tomales Bay.*

No effects, and in particular, no traffic, odor, or water quality effects, on Tomales Bay have been identified by the Draft EIR/EIS, as discussed below in Response to Comments 3-5 and 3-6. Therefore the Project will not impact recreational resources in Tomales Bay.

**Response to Comment 3-5**

*Comment Summary: The comment states that the West County Alternative would have direct long-term impacts on the natural resources of Tomales Bay and indirect effects on the land resources of Tomales Point.*

Potential impacts on the natural resources of the Tomales Bay environment would be linked to impacts on water quality. As described in Response to Comment 3-6, no effects on Tomales Bay water quality that could affect marine or land resources have been identified by the EIR/EIS.

### **Response to Comment 3-6**

*Comment Summary: The comment states that the Project impacts in Tomales Bay have not been evaluated.*

Impacts to Tomales Bay were not discussed because of the distance of Tomales Bay from the Project area. Figures 6-1 through 6-6 in Appendix I-17 (Water Quality Impact Analysis Report Vol. II) of the Draft EIR/EIS show a minor impact on water quality in the Estero de San Antonio, approximately two miles from the closest point of Point Reyes National Seashore waters. These graphs show Project impacts attenuating within the Estero to a level that would be indistinguishable from background conditions outside the Estero as a result of the dispersion and dilution afforded by the conditions in Bodega Bay in the vicinity of the esteros. Thus there would be no measurable effects on Park Service lands or waters at Tomales Bay.

### **Response to Comment 3-7**

*Comment Summary: The comment states that the cumulative impacts in Tomales Bay have not been evaluated.*

Because there are no Project impacts in Tomales Bay, there is no need to evaluate cumulative impacts. Refer to Responses to Comments 3-4, 3-5 and 3-6.

### **Response to Comments 3-8, 9, and 10**

*Comment Summary: The comment indicates that legislation was submitted to Congress for an expansion of the Point Reyes National Seashore that would encompass the Estero Americano and Estero de San Antonio and surrounding lands. The comment states that this proposal is not noted in the Draft EIR/EIS and that there is no discussion in the Draft EIR/EIS of how the West County Alternatives will impact this proposal. The comment concludes by stating that the Project may significantly impact this proposed legislation.*

The comment is correct in stating that legislation was introduced in Congress to expand the boundaries of the National Seashore, and that this is not noted in the Draft EIR/EIS. The EIR/EIS authors concur that this should be noted. This legislation was introduced as a result of the Tomales Bay/Bodega Bay Watershed Boundary Study for Point Reyes National Seashore completed in July, 1995, and this also should be noted in the Draft EIR/EIS.

Therefore, the following changes are made to the Draft EIR/EIS:

Page 4.1-21. Insert the following before the last paragraph:

## **Point Reyes National Seashore**

Legislation has been introduced in the U.S. Congress to expand the boundaries of the Point Reyes National Seashore to include portions of the lands within the watersheds of the Estero Americano and Estero de San Antonio. Proposed acquisition of lands would be limited to purchase of 500 acres in fee simple ownership; remaining acquisition would be conservation easements. This legislation was introduced as a result of the Tomales Bay/Bodega Bay Watershed Boundary Study for the Point Reyes National Seashore completed in July, 1995. The proposed expansion would include lands along the Estero Americano and Estero de San Antonio which are proposed for agricultural irrigation as part of the Project. No Project facilities would be located within the remainder of the area proposed for the boundary expansion.

With respect to a discussion of impacts of the West County Alternatives on the properties included in the proposed legislation, the environmental impacts of the Project on these properties have already been identified in Chapter 4 of the Draft EIR/EIS. The change of ownership would not change the physical impacts already identified.

With respect to consistency of the Project with the four primary objectives of the Watershed Boundary Study, the following evaluation is provided:

- “preserve productive long-term agriculture and mariculture in the region.”

Provision of reclaimed water irrigation opportunities to existing ranches within the proposed boundary expansion is consistent with and supportive of preserving long-term agriculture. Mariculture is restricted to Tomales Bay and will not be affected by the Project (refer to Response to Comment 3-6 above).

- “furnish watershed and environmental protection of Tomales Bay and Bodega Bay.”

Any ranches which receive reclaimed water for irrigation would need to meet higher standards for agricultural practices, thus reducing existing problems of erosion, manure management, and impacts of grazing on sensitive plant and wildlife communities. The Draft EIR/EIS identifies significant unavoidable impacts on aquatic life and water quality in the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary relative to strict Sanctuary standards -- these impacts are not necessarily considered adverse. Refer to Response to Comment 2-20.

- “maintain the relatively undeveloped nature of the land surrounding Tomales Bay and Bodega Bay by providing guarantees for non-development.”

Provision of irrigation opportunities to existing agriculture in the region supports the increased productivity of local agriculture, thus deterring sale of ranches for development.

- “protect the pastoral nature of the land adjacent to Point Reyes National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area.”

Again, irrigation with reclaimed water will support existing agriculture and the pastoral views it provides.

In summary, the Project will not conflict with the proposed legislation, and impacts of the Project upon lands included in the Watershed Boundary Study have already been identified in the Draft EIR/EIS.

### **Response to Comment 3-11**

*Comment Summary: The comment states that the review time for the Draft EIR/EIS was not adequate.*

Refer to Master Response E, located in Section 6.2 of this document, which deals with time for review of the Draft EIR/EIS.

### **Response to Comment 3-12**

*Comment Summary: The comment states that the three volume Draft EIR/EIS and the 16 volumes of supporting documentation could not be adequately reviewed in the time-frame allowed.*

Refer to Master Response E, located in Section 6.2 of this document, which deals with time for review of the Draft EIR/EIS.

### **Response to Comment 3-13**

*Comment Summary: The comment letter states that an extension of the review period for the Draft EIR/EIS should have been provided.*

The City has chosen not to extend the review period; please refer to Master Response E, located in Section 6.2 of this document, which deals with time for review of the Draft EIR/EIS. In addition, other commentators within the Department of the Interior reviewed the Draft EIR/EIS within the time allocated, without suggesting that any extension was necessary (Refer to Comment Letter 4).