



MWD

METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

June 16, 1998

To: Board of Directors (Engineering and Operations Committee--Action)

From: *FOR:* General Manager

Submitted by: Gary M. Snyder
Chief Engineer

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Subject: Certify Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for Santa Ana Wash Crossing of Inland Feeder Project

Reference: Appropriation No. 15122

RECOMMENDATION(S)

To construct the Santa Ana River Wash crossing segment of the Inland Feeder Program, it is recommended that your Board: review and consider the information in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) as revised by the Supplemental EIR (SEIR) and based on independent judgment and analysis certify that the SEIR has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); approve the project modifications evaluated in the Final SEIR; and find that the project as modified results in no new significant adverse unmitigated environmental impacts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Inland Feeder Project, certified by your Board in February 1993, calls for a tunnel to cross the environmentally sensitive Santa Ana River Wash. Recent engineering studies and staff coordination with local agencies have offered Metropolitan the opportunity to revise the construction method from a tunnel to a cut and cover trench pipeline. This would result in a significant cost savings, reduce construction time, and avoid tunneling in poor soil conditions.

Approval of the recommendations by your Board will adopt the revised construction method and certify that the SEIR for the Inland Feeder Project has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and certify that your Board has reviewed and considered the information contained in the SEIR prior to approving the project modification.

JUSTIFICATION

Construction in the Santa Ana Wash using a cut and cover trench as opposed to a tunnel will result in a significant cost savings, reduce construction time, and avoid difficult tunneling in poor soil conditions.

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO PROPOSED ACTION

Do not proceed with cut and cover trench method

Metropolitan could determine to proceed with the cut and cover trench method and proceed with the existing tunnel design. This would significantly increase construction costs and delay the completion of construction in this environmentally sensitive area.

ACTIONS AND MILESTONES

- Advertise for construction bids July 1998
- Issue Notice-to-Proceed late 1998
- Complete construction in Santa Ana River Wash mid-999

CEQA COMPLIANCE / ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

On February 9, 1993, your Board certified the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Inland Feeder Program. A Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed pipeline construction across the Santa Ana River Wash. Your Board is required to review and consider the information in the SEIR along with the previous EIR prior to approving the proposed actions. A copy of the SEIR Executive Summary is attached for your information. The original FEIR along with the Final SEIR are available in the Office of the Executive Secretary.

DETAILED REPORT

In February 1993, your Board certified the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Inland Feeder Project which included a tunnel through the Santa Ana River Wash area. The Santa Ana River Wash Crossing segment begins near the city boundary line between Highland and Redlands and stretches approximately 2,600 feet across the wash to an area just north of the Community of Mentone in the County of San Bernardino. The wash area is utilized for flood control and resources management and lies within an environmentally sensitive area.

Recent engineering studies/investigations and negotiations with local agencies have determined that an opportunity exists to cross the Santa Ana River utilizing a cut and cover trench instead of the tunneling method. The cut and cover method offers Metropolitan several advantages as opposed to tunneling including: 1) avoiding difficult tunneling conditions in an area of highly uncemented soils, potentially high groundwater and an abundance of large boulders, 2) a reduction in construction time; and 3) a significant reduction in construction costs.

A Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) was prepared for the proposed modification and filed for public review and comment in April 1998. The public review period

concluded in June 1998. The Final SEIR consists of the Draft SEIR, public comments received during the public review period, and Metropolitan's response to those comments, including additional information where necessary.

Comments from local and resource agencies received during the public review period of the Draft SEIR encouraged cooperation among Federal, State, local, and private interests in minimizing impacts to sensitive species on the Santa Ana River Wash by establishing a corridor adjacent to the Inland Feeder for the installation of other water conveyance or utilities lines. Accordingly, Metropolitan will install sleeves of sufficient size to accommodate future installation of conveyance facilities or other utilities resulting in no additional disturbance of overlying environmentally sensitive areas. This will not result in any additional impacts beyond those identified in the Draft SEIR. Any future users will be required to complete all necessary environmental documentation, provide evidence of appropriate certification and mitigation commitments, and reimburse Metropolitan for associated costs.

The Final SEIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to document significant changes in environmental conditions, impacts, and mitigation requirements that would result from implementation of the proposed modification. The Final SEIR does not otherwise affect the findings or conclusions of the Inland Feeder Project FEIR certified in February 1993.

BSB/mg:rev5
(SantaAnaWash)

SECTION 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) assesses the potential impacts of a proposed modification to the adopted Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) Inland Feeder Project. Specifically, this SEIR assesses the potential environmental impacts associated with the Santa Ana River crossing (SARC) of the Inland Feeder Project using a cut and cover trench versus the adopted tunneling for the installation of this segment of the pipeline. The SEIR focuses on those impacts that would be potentially significant and that were not previously disclosed in the certified Final EIR/Environmental Assessment (EA) for the adopted Inland Feeder Project.

This SEIR was prepared pursuant to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended, and the State CEQA Guidelines. Sections 15163 and 15162 of the State CEQA Guidelines explain the circumstances under which a Supplement to a previously certified EIR is the appropriate environmental document. The Guidelines allow the use of an SEIR when substantial changes to a project are proposed and only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previously certified Final EIR adequately apply to the changed situation. The SEIR will revise the existing certified Final EIR for the adopted Inland Feeder Project, which is described in more detail in the following section.

Metropolitan distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study (IS) for the SEIR on January 28, 1998. The NOP/IS is provided in Appendix A. The distribution list for the NOP is provided in Appendix B.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION TO THE INLAND FEEDER PROJECT

As noted, Metropolitan has identified the opportunity to cross the Santa Ana River (River) using cut and cover trench to install the pipeline, rather than the tunnel installation method assumed for the adopted Inland Feeder Project. The adopted Inland Feeder Project and the location of this proposed modification are shown on Figure 1-1.

In this discussion, the Santa Ana River, the location for the proposed crossing and the immediately adjacent areas are referred to as the SARC.

The proposed SARC will consist of approximately 2,610 linear feet of pipeline installed in a cut and cover trench. The pipeline would be welded steel pipe, buried at a depth ranging from eight to 25 feet. The pipeline would begin on the north side of the Santa Ana River wash at a point about 1,000 feet south of the boundary between the Cities of Highland and Redlands in unincorporated San Bernardino County and approximately 300 feet north of the northern boundary of the woollystar mitigation lands set aside for the Seven Oaks Dam project, extending south across both the woollystar mitigation lands and the active wash of the Santa Ana River. This proposed cut and cover trench segment would end approximately 250 feet south of the approximate centerline of the active wash, as it enters an area adjacent to the dedicated right-of-way for Opal Avenue and joins the already adopted cut and cover trench in this area. The

The Metropolitan Board of Directors certified the Final EIR/EA for the Inland Feeder Project on February 9, 1993, and selected the Far East Combination Alternative as the preferred project. The Final EIR/EA includes detailed descriptions of Metropolitan, the purpose and need for the Inland Feeder, the alternatives analysis and the environmental evaluation of the Inland Feeder alternatives. The Final EIR/EA is available for review at the Metropolitan headquarters office. All the required environmental permits and approvals for the adopted Inland Feeder Project have been issued by the appropriate regulatory and resources agencies.

As documented in the certified Final EIR/EA, the adopted Inland Feeder Project assumed that an approximately 2,800 foot soft ground tunnel would be constructed under the Santa Ana River and the woollystar mitigation lands. The tunnel segment would extend from a portal on the north to a portal on the south, transitioning at each portal to cut and cover trench north and south of the portals, respectively. The potential impacts of the adopted tunnel were analyzed and documented in the certified Final EIR/EA.

1.4 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

1.4.1 OVERVIEW

This section summarizes the potential adverse impacts of the proposed SARC related to land use, biological resources and cultural resources. The environmental parameters found not to result in adverse impacts include population and housing, geology, water, air quality, transportation and circulation, energy and mineral resources, hazards, noise, public services, utilities and service systems, aesthetics and recreation. The specific environmental parameters that may result in potential adverse impacts include land use related to inconsistencies with adopted environmental plans, potential impacts on endangered, threatened or rare species or their habitats, and potential impacts on archaeological and historic resources. However, with application of defined mitigation measures, all impacts will be mitigated to a less than significant level.

1.4.2 LAND USE

The proposed SARC could result in potentially significant adverse impacts related to conflicts with applicable environmental plans, specifically the Woolly Star Management Plan. The Management Plan is a public policy and planning document intended to effectively manage woollystar populations on lands acquired by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and reserved for the protection of this species. Construction of the proposed SARC would disturb approximately 7.5 acres within the mitigation lands. The construction of the proposed SARC, although a short term impact, would be inconsistent with the Management Plan because it would result in the removal of Riversidean alluvial fan sage scrub (RASS) and potential habitat for both the woollystar and slender-horned spineflower. After the installation of the pipeline is complete, the trench will be backfilled and the topsoil will be replaced.

The potentially significant adverse impacts of the proposed SARC related to conflicts with the Management Plan will be mitigated to below a level of significance based on the incorporation of mitigation measures described later in Section 4.4 (Environmental Evaluation Related to Biological Resources). One of the goals of the Management Plan addresses woollystar, biotic diversity, slender-horned spineflower, San Diego horned lizard, RASS and cultural resources. Mitigation measures B-15 and B-16 address the majority of biological conflicts with the

Act. Metropolitan addressed the impacts of the proposed SARC on the SBKR and has proposed a mitigation program to minimize biological impacts associated with the proposed SARC. The mitigation program was coordinated with the USFWS and will continue to be processed through the appropriate federal permit procedures.

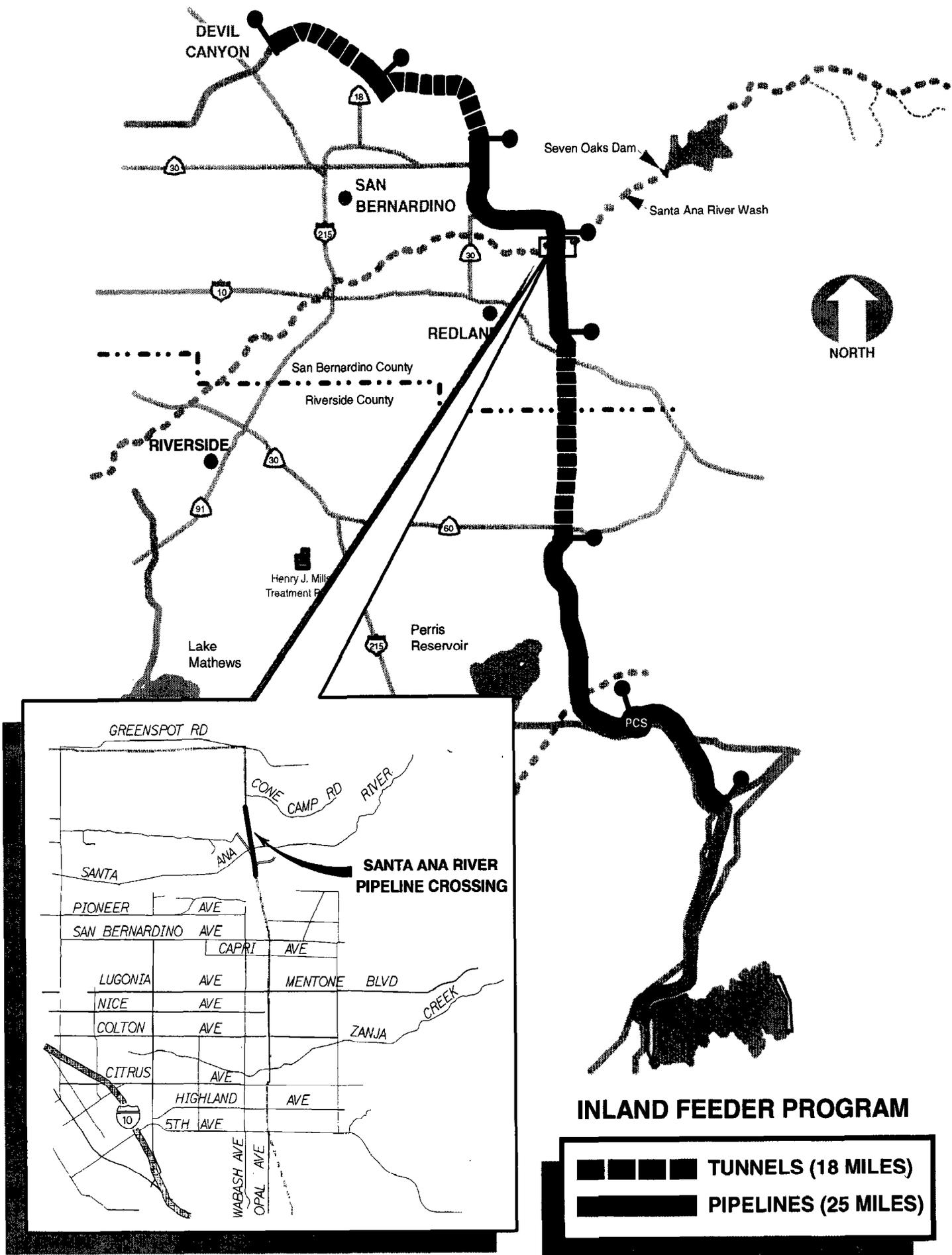


FIGURE 1 - 1 ADOPTED INLAND FEEDER AND LOCATION OF PROPOSED SANTA ANA RIVER PIPELINE CROSSING