

- **Board of Directors**
Engineering, Operations and Real Property Committee

June 12, 2001 Board Meeting

8-2

Subject

Authorize increasing funding by \$1.2 million to \$2.255 million for preliminary design, agency coordination and permitting, and environmental documentation for Metropolitan's Colorado River Aqueduct--Whitewater Siphon protection and mining pit reclamation program (Appn. 15341)

Description

The Whitewater River siphons along the Colorado River Aqueduct (Whitewater Siphons) are subject to potential damage due to periodic erosive flood flows. On August 11, 1998, the Metropolitan Board appropriated \$815,000 to purchase 115 acres of land adjacent to and downstream of the Whitewater Siphons to protect the aqueduct from anticipated erosion from a proposed enlargement of an active mining pit. As presented to the Board in 1998, the open mining pit, now owned by Metropolitan, requires remediation to provide long-term protection for the siphons and to bring the pit into conformance with state and county regulations.

In April 2000, the Board authorized funding for a study to identify protection alternatives for the Whitewater Siphons and remediation methods for the recently purchased mining pit. The Board action also increased the program appropriation by \$240,000 to a total of \$1.055 million. Staff has now completed the study and has identified alternative protection and remediation options. Approval of the following recommendation will authorize an additional \$1.2 million to complete preliminary design, develop detailed construction and environmental mitigation cost estimates for the project, conduct required agency coordination and permitting, and prepare the necessary environmental documentation pursuant to the California Environment Quality Act (CEQA). Funds for these activities were included in the Whitewater Siphons Protection Program budget. This project was evaluated and recommended by the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) Evaluation Team and is included in the Capital Budget for FY 2001/02.

In the future the Board will be requested to certify the final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and authorize an appropriation increase to perform final design, and award a construction contract for the protection of the Whitewater Siphons and the remediation of the mining pit. (See [Attachment 1](#) for a detailed report, [Attachment 2](#) for a financial statement, and [Attachment 3](#) for a location map.)

Policy

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 5108: Capital Project Appropriation

CEQA

The environmental documentation on the protection and remediation alternatives will be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) during the preliminary design phase, and submitted to the Board for certification prior to project approval. The proposed action is statutorily exempt under the provisions of CEQA, since it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions which the Board has not approved, adopted or funded. As such, this proposed action qualifies as a Feasibility and Planning Studies Exemption (Section 15262 of the State CEQA Guidelines).

The CEQA determination is: Determine that pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed action is statutorily exempt per Section 15262 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Staff Recommendation

- a. Adopt the CEQA determination and authorize increasing the appropriation by \$1.2 million for preliminary design and preparation of environmental documentation for the Colorado River Aqueduct--Whitewater Siphon protection and mining pit reclamation project; and
- b. Delegate to the Chief Executive Officer the authority to award contracts exceeding \$250,000 for environmental documentation and preliminary design of the Whitewater Siphon protection.

Fiscal Impact: \$1.2 million of budgeted CIP funds under existing Appropriation 15341.



Roy L. Wolfe
Manager, Corporate Resources

5/10/2001

Date



Ronald R. Oster
President & Chief Executive Officer

5/22/2001

Date

Attachment 1 – Detailed Report

Attachment 2 – Financial Statement

Attachment 3 – Location Map

BLA #792

Detailed Report

In March 1992, the Whitewater River siphons of the Colorado River Aqueduct (Whitewater Siphons) were exposed by erosion of the overlying cover during a moderate storm event in the Whitewater River Canyon. Metropolitan's forces performed emergency work to locally redirect flood flows and install a protective slab over the Whitewater Siphons to help protect the siphons from catastrophic failure. However, the work undertaken was intended to be a temporary solution. As a result, a capital program was established to design and construct a more permanent protection system for the siphons. In January 1995, an infrastructure review report of the structural integrity of Metropolitan's distribution system recommended that additional studies be undertaken to review options for protection of the aqueduct.

Also in 1995, Metropolitan received notice of a proposal from an adjacent property owner, Granite Construction Company, to significantly expand surface mining operation within the Whitewater River canyon. A study was conducted to assess combined impacts of future flood flows and the mining operation. The review indicated that should the mining expansion occur, the perimeter of the mine would extend across the full width of the canyon directly downstream of the siphons. Studies indicated that erosion of the riverbed in the vicinity of the siphons, exacerbated by water flowing into the proposed expanded mining pit, would significantly accelerate erosion of the siphons. After two and one half years of detailed analyses and negotiations with the property owner and regulatory agencies, Metropolitan's legal department recommended settlement based on mining rights predating the Whitewater Siphons installation.

On August 11, 1998, the Board of Directors appropriated \$815,000 to purchase the existing mining site, covering 115 acres, from the Granite Construction Company. At that time, it was known that remediation of the mining pit would be required to permanently stabilize the topography in the vicinity of the Whitewater Siphons and comply with state and county requirements.

In April 2000, the Board authorized \$240,000 to fund a study to identify and assess the feasibility of alternatives for protection of the Colorado River Aqueduct siphons and remediation of the mining pit at the Whitewater River. Five alternatives have been identified for protection of the Whitewater Siphons (i.e., weir check dam, multiple weir check dams, gabion mats, concrete cover or relocation below ground), and three alternatives for reclamation of the mining pit (i.e., partially fill pit and lay back slopes, partially fill and buttress slopes, or fill completely). These alternatives will be examined during the preliminary design for the best approach.

Approval of the following recommendation will authorize an additional \$1.2 million to complete preliminary design, develop detailed construction and environmental mitigation cost estimates for the project, conduct required agency coordination and permitting, and prepare the necessary environmental documentation pursuant to the California Environment Quality Act (CEQA). The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared pursuant to the requirements of the CEQA. In a future board action, the Board will be requested to certify the final EIR and authorize an increase to the appropriation to perform final design, advertisement, and award of a construction contract for the recommended alternative.

Actions and Milestones

- January 1995 - Completed Infrastructure Review Study
- February 1996 – Initiated mining pit study
- August 1998 – Board authorization to purchase property
- April 2000 – Board authorization to identify protection alternatives
- June 2001 – Board authorization to begin preliminary design and environmental documentation
- December 2002 – Board action to certify EIR, and authorize final design and construction
- Late 2003 - Award construction contract

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Board Action No. 3 for Appropriation No. 15341 to finance preliminary design, development of cost estimates, and preparation of environmental documentation for the protection of the siphons and remediation of the mining pit adjacent to the Colorado River Aqueduct – Whitewater River Siphons:

	BOARD ACTION No. 1 (Aug. 1998)	BOARD ACTION No. 2 (Apr. 2000)	BOARD ACTION No. 3 (Jun. 2001)
Labor:			
Project Management, Environmental Planning	\$0	\$149,000	\$353,900
Engineering, Analysis, Cost Estimating, Survey	\$0	\$91,000	\$212,100
Subtotal Labor	\$0	\$240,000	\$566,000
Professional and Technical	\$0	\$0	\$718,500
Right-of-Way & Land (Land Acquisition)	\$815,000	\$815,000	\$815,000
Remaining Budget	\$0	\$0	\$155,500
Total	\$815,000	\$1,055,000	\$2,255,000

FUNDING REQUEST

Program Name:	Whitewater Siphon Protection		
Source of Funds:	Pay-As-You-Go Fund		
Appropriation No.:	15341	Board Action No.:	3
Requested Amount:	\$ 1,200,000	Capital Program No.:	15341-R
Total Appropriated Amount:	\$ 2,255,000	Capital Program Page No.:	E-40
Total Program Estimate: ** (included in the FY 2001/02 Capital Budget)	\$10,386,000	Program Goals:	A-Asset/System Integrity

**Note: Pending mitigation requirements and construction contracts, the total program estimate is subject to revision.

