

DATE: June 12, 2024

TO: State Clearinghouse; Responsible and Trustee Agencies; and Other Interested Parties

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of an Environmental Impact Report

PROJECT: Sandridge Irrigation Pipeline Extension Project

LEAD AGENCY: Stratford Public Utility District
19681 Railroad Street
Stratford, CA 93266

Notice is hereby given that a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) prepared by the Stratford Public Utility District (SPUD) is available for public review.

Project Location: The proposed project is located in northwest Kings County, California. The approximately 5.5 miles of pipeline associated with the proposed project begins approximately 2 miles south of the City of Lemoore, in the vicinity of Java Avenue directly west of State Route 41 and includes pipeline that would replace existing ditches that run south for approximately 2 miles before crossing State Route 41 near King Avenue. The pipeline runs east for approximately 450 feet before turning south along 20th Avenue for approximately 1 mile, eventually crossing Laurel Avenue. It then runs south along the Stratford Canal for about 0.5 mile before turning west, crossing the canal, and running along Lincoln Avenue for approximately 280 feet. Subsequently, it turns south, running along 20th Avenue for about 0.25 mile, and further west along an existing canal for around 0.5 mile, where it turns southwest and crosses the Tulare Lake Canal. It continues south for approximately 700 feet before turning west for approximately 0.4 mile, crossing the Kings River Canal, and terminating at Blakely Canal (**Figure 1**).

The entire pipeline route is located on Sandridge properties, with the exception of the State Route 41 crossing, a 320-foot-long by 20-foot-wide easement across the southeast corner of SPUD property located adjacent to Lincoln Avenue and the Stratford Canal, and crossings of several Kings County rural streets, the Stratford Canal, the Kings River Canal, and the Tulare Lake Canal easement.

Water from the pipeline would be used to irrigate approximately 3,200 acres of existing Sandridge farmlands located south of SR 198/Jackson Avenue along the SR 41 corridor, east of Kings River and surrounding the Stratford area in Kings County, within the Tulare Lake Subbasin.

Project Description: The proposed project encompasses construction of an approximately 5.5-mile long, underground 48-inch irrigation water pipeline that would connect to and from existing Sandridge water distribution systems and replace existing open irrigation ditches. The proposed project includes segments that are both constructed (approximately 3.2 miles) and yet to be constructed (approximately 2.3 miles); these segments collectively comprise the proposed project (approximately 5.5 total miles of pipeline). The proposed project is designed to integrate with existing Sandridge water conveyance systems (i.e., pipelines and canals).

Construction of the pipeline originally began in 2021 and required a 320-foot-long easement across SPUD's property, which SPUD granted in October 2021. Construction activities were put on hold after a legal challenge to SPUD's grant of the easement was filed by the Tulare Lake Canal Company alleging that SPUD failed to comply with CEQA. Tulare Lake Canal Company obtained a temporary restraining order preventing further project construction and use in March

2022, which remains in place pending resolution of the CEQA litigation.

Sandridge currently sources its irrigation water via existing Sandridge-owned wells located north of Stratford. These irrigation water supplies are primarily conveyed through canals, as well as existing pipelines located to the east of the approximately 5.5 miles of pipeline associated with the proposed project. The proposed project would use High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) pipes to convey water from northern to eastern and southwestern areas near Stratford within Kings County and enhance efficiency by reducing water loss due to sandy soil perching and evaporation.

New construction would involve the installation of a 48-inch diameter HDPE pipeline approximately 200 feet across the Tulare Lake Canal, controlled by TLCC and accessed on Sandridge-owned land with a 120-foot right-of-way held by TLCC for the canal. The pipeline would be installed approximately 4 feet below the channel of the Tulare Lake Canal. The pipeline is designed so that when installation of the pipeline and restoration of the canal is complete, the pipeline would not interfere with the canal's transportation of water or otherwise affect the integrity of the earthen canal.

New construction would also involve the replacement of approximately 2.3 miles of existing canal that experiences significant water loss due to evaporation on Sandridge-owned land located north of Kent Avenue and south of Jersey Avenue near Stratford to State Route 41. Installation of the new pipeline would require crossings under Kent Avenue, Kansas Avenue, and State Route 41. The pipeline would be installed at a depth of approximately 3.5 to 4 feet below the surface.

The previously constructed sections of the proposed project encompass approximately 2.4 miles of underground 48-inch diameter HDPE pipeline installed at a depth of approximately 3.5 to 4 feet below the surface of the existing canal between State Route 41 and the north side of the Tulare Lake Canal, as well as approximately 0.8 mile of 48-inch diameter HDPE pipeline installed below the existing canal from the south side of the Tulare Lake Canal to Blakely Canal. This included crossings under Lincoln Avenue, 20 ½ Avenue, 21st Avenue, Laurel Avenue, Lansing Avenue, 20th Avenue, Stratford Canal, and Kings River Canal.

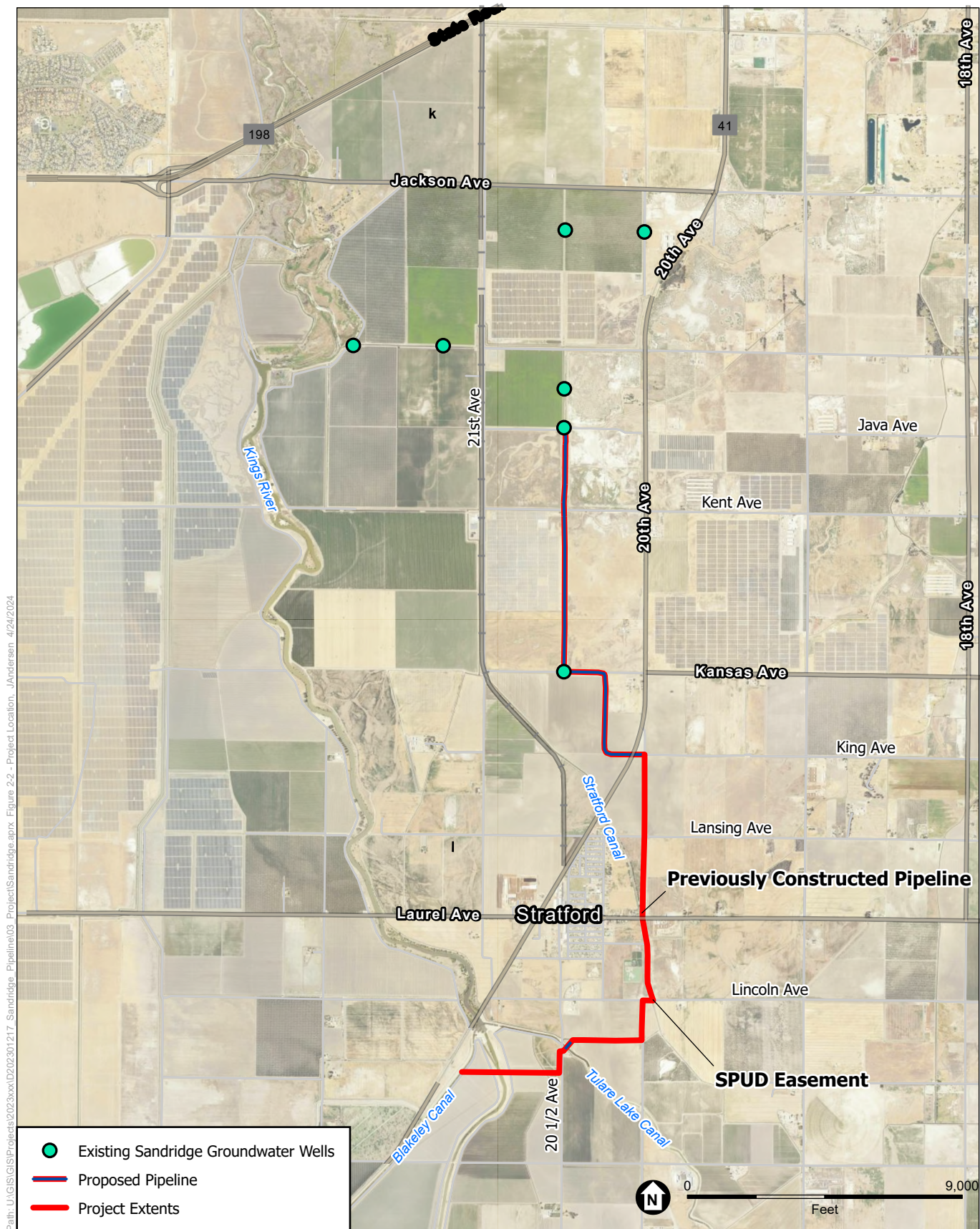
Operation of the proposed project would involve the transport of groundwater supplies from seven existing Sandridge groundwater wells located north of Stratford (in addition to any residual runoff that flows into the open sections of Sandridge irrigation canals) to irrigate approximately 3,200 acres of existing Sandridge-owned farmlands located in the vicinity of Stratford within Kings County. Any residual water in the pipeline after the irrigation season would be released into Blakely Canal. The proposed project would not result in an increase in groundwater pumping or surface water use and would result in the availability of additional irrigation water supply relative to existing conditions as a result of reduced water loss due to soil percolation and evaporation. It is not proposed that the additional water be used to expand operations for either Sandridge or other farms.

Review Period: The Draft EIR will be circulated for a 45-day public review period beginning **Wednesday, June 12, 2024**, and ending **Friday, July 26, 2024**.

Please provide any written comments (either by mail or electronically) on the Draft EIR no later than **5:00 pm on Friday, July 26, 2024**. Please direct all comments to the following address:

Stratford Public Utility District, 19681 Railroad Street, Stratford, CA 93266
Email: stratfordpud@gmail.com

Document Availability. This Notice of Availability is available for review on the Office of Planning and Research's State Clearinghouse website, at the Kings County Clerk's office, at the Stratford Post Office at 20340 Main Street, Stratford, CA 93266, and at the SPUD office at 19681 Railroad Street, Stratford, CA 93266. The Draft EIR is available for review on the Office of Planning and Research's State Clearinghouse website and at SPUD's office at 19681 Railroad Street, Stratford, CA 93266.



SOURCE: CA DWR 2023; ESA, 2024



Sandridge Irrigation Pipeline Extension

Figure 1
Project Location