



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
North Central Region
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916-358-2900
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
MEGHAN HERTEL, Director



June 5, 2026

Brian Deason
Environmental Resources Supervisor
El Dorado Irrigation District
2890 Mosquito Road
Placerville, CA 95667
bdeason@eid.org

Subject: TEMPORARY RESERVOIR RE-OPERATION WATER TRANSFER PROJECT
NEGATIVE DECLARATION (ND)
SCH No. 2026050621

Dear Brian Deason:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received and reviewed the Notice of Intent to Adopt an ND from El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) for the Temporary Reservoir Re-Operation Water Transfer Project (Project) pursuant the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) statute and guidelines.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish, wildlife, native plants, and their habitat. Likewise, CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may need to exercise its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a).) CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. (Fish & G. Code, § 1802.) Similarly for purposes of CEQA, CDFW provides, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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CDFW may also act as a Responsible Agency under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381.) CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority. (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.) Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), the project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

EID plans to transfer up to 5,000 acre-feet (AF) of water during summer and fall of 2026 to federal and/or state water contractors south of the Delta (collectively, the Buyers). Up to 620 AF of water would be made available from Weber Reservoir and 4,880 AF of water would be made available from Caples and Silver Lakes through reservoir re-operations. EID would rely on water stored in Jenkinson Lake to meet consumptive demands during the transfer period in lieu of water from Caples and Silver Lakes. Exact timing and quantities of water transferred would depend on hydrologic conditions and demand from Buyers leading up to the transfer period; however, the quantity will not exceed 5,000 AF.

The Project would result in the temporary decreased storage of up to 620 AF in Weber Reservoir and up to 4,880 AF in Jenkinson Lake, and increased inflow of up to 5,000 AF into Folsom Reservoir. Once in Folsom Reservoir, the transfer water would be released through Folsom Dam, and then re-operated via Lake Natoma into the Lower American River (LAR). The transfer water released from Folsom Reservoir would be coordinated with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the systemwide operation of the Central Valley and State Water Projects.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The coldwater pool in Folsom Reservoir provides habitat for a variety of coldwater fish species, including rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). In addition, the coldwater pool provides a significant source of cold water in the summer and early fall in the LAR for fall-run Chinook salmon and the federally threatened Central Valley steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and Reclamation manages releases from the coldwater pool for the protection of these species.

The LAR is considered temperature impaired (SWRCB 2024), and Reclamation has identified target temperature requirements for Chinook salmon and steelhead (Reclamation 2019). LAR water temperatures frequently exceed optimal conditions for summer rearing of juvenile steelhead and for fall-run Chinook salmon spawning in October and November. Temperature thresholds for juvenile steelhead and spawning Chinook salmon were exceeded in 2018, 2020, and 2022 when previous EID transfers occurred in the system (SacPAS 2026). Folsom Reservoir operations directly influence conditions in LAR. The ND states that the proposed project will not result in any direct impacts to reservoir water temperatures or subsequent changes to volume of the coldwater pool.

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While temperature data from previous transfer periods are provided, these data are insufficient in demonstrating a lack of impacts to the coldwater pool and water temperatures in the LAR.

In order to fully evaluate any potential impacts of the proposed Project to the volume of the coldwater pool and coldwater releases to the Lower American River, CDFW recommends EID consult with Reclamation and conduct a temperature analysis. The temperature analysis should verify that the volume of coldwater habitat available in the reservoir and for downstream releases will not change as a result of this project, and that Reclamation will continue to be able to meet temperature requirements in the Lower American River.

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

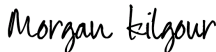
CONCLUSION

Pursuant to Public Resources Code § 21092 and § 21092.2, CDFW requests written notification of proposed actions and pending decisions regarding the proposed project. Written notifications shall be directed to: California Department of Fish and Wildlife North Central Region, 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670 or emailed to R2CEQA@wildlife.ca.gov.

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the ND for Temporary Reservoir Re-Operation Water Transfer Project to EID in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. CDFW personnel are available for consultation regarding biological resources and strategies to minimize and/or mitigate impacts. Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Alyssa Obester, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), at alyssa.obester@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:



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Morgan Kilgour
Regional Manager

ec: Briana Seapy, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor),
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Alyssa Obester, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist),
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Lillian McDougall, Environmental Scientist, lillian.mcdougall@wildlife.ca.gov
Department of Fish and Wildlife

Arvin Chi, Environmental Scientist, arvin.chi@waterboards.ca.gov
State Water Resources Control Board

Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, State Clearinghouse, Sacramento

REFERENCES

Reclamation 2019. Reinitiation of Consultation on the Coordinated Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project Central Valley Project, California Mid-Pacific Region, Final Biological Assessment, Chapter 4: Proposed Action.

<https://www.usbr.gov/mp/bdo/lto/biop.html>

Sacramento Valley Prediction and Assessment of Salmon (SacPAS). 2026. Lower American Water Temperature Threshold.

https://www.cbr.washington.edu/sacramento/tmp/tc_american_1780324661_925.html#nms2019

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2024. 2024 California Integrated Report: Surface Water Quality Assessments to Comply with Clean Water Act Sections 303(d) and 305(b). https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/tmdl/2023_2024state_ir_reports/2024-integrated-report-final-staff-report.pdf