

1. Abstract

The Nevada Irrigation District Regional Water Supply Project would convey and treat water from Lake Combie to the southwestern portion of the District including portions of the City of Lincoln. Approval of the project is a discretionary action by a public agency and, therefore, subject to compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of CEQA is to disclose potential project-related impacts to decision makers and the public, identify methods to minimize impacts, identify feasible mitigation and/or alternatives to the project, and solicit and respond to comments from the public and other agencies. The project-specific CEQA process will be initiated once the engineering planning phase is completed and a proposed project has been defined. Currently, it is estimated that the CEQA process will formally be initiated during summer 2009. The CEQA compliance and public participation process typically take 12 to 18 months to complete.

2. Project Background

In 2005, a Water Treatment Plant Planning and Site Study (Figure 1) was conducted to initiate the planning process, assess the overall feasibility of the project and, generally define possible treatment plant and storage reservoir locations. Based on this study, it was determined that the project is technically feasible. In 2008 and 2009, NID began the detailed project planning phase by conducting an in-depth siting and routing study, which included environmental considerations. The goal was to develop the optimal project and avoid or minimize impacts to the environment, if feasible.

The next steps, as they pertain to environmental compliance, are as follows:

- Continue to factor environmental considerations into the pre-design process
- Finalize engineering technical memorandums to define the proposed project
- Comply with the California Environmental Quality Act
- Conduct the State and Federal Environmental Permitting Process

3. What is CEQA?

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is a state statute that requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.

CEQA requires state and local agencies to make decisions with environmental consequences in mind by mandating that they:

- Disclose the potential environmental effects of a proposed project to decision makers and the public
- Identify methods to minimize those effects to the environment
- Identify feasible mitigation measures and/or alternatives to the project
- Solicit and respond to comments from the public and from other agencies concerned with the project.

Guidelines for the implementation of CEQA are in Title 14 Division 6, Chapter 3 Sections 15000-15387 of the California Code of Regulations.

4. What are the Specific Goals of CEQA?

The CEQA process seeks to accomplish the following five major objectives using the procedures indicated below.

Disclose Environmental Impacts

The CEQA process is primarily designed to identify and disclose to decision makers and the public the significant environmental impacts of a proposed project prior to its consideration and approval. This is accomplished by the preparation of CEQA documents such as initial studies, negative declarations, and/or environmental impact reports (EIRs). Potential impacts from the NID Regional Water Supply Project will be reviewed through an EIR level of analysis.

Prevent or Reduce Environmental Damage

If potential adverse environmental impacts are identified, the CEQA process next attempts to identify ways to prevent or reduce these impacts by requiring consideration of feasible project alternatives or the adoption of mitigation measures. For project impacts that cannot be avoided along with appropriate mitigation methods, Findings and a Statement of Overriding Consideration is required. NID aims to mitigate impacts to less than significant levels to the maximum extent practicable.

Promote Interagency Coordination

Lead, responsible, and trustee agencies assist each other in more thoroughly understanding the potential environmental impacts associated with a proposed project by incorporating one or more of the following into their CEQA processes:

- Early consultation
- State Clearinghouse review
- Scoping meetings
- Comments on Draft EIR
- Notice of preparation (NOP)
- Review of Final EIR Response to Comments



Figure 1. The Nevada Irrigation District Planning and Site Study. This study was conducted in 2005 to assess the general feasibility of a Regional Water Supply Project.

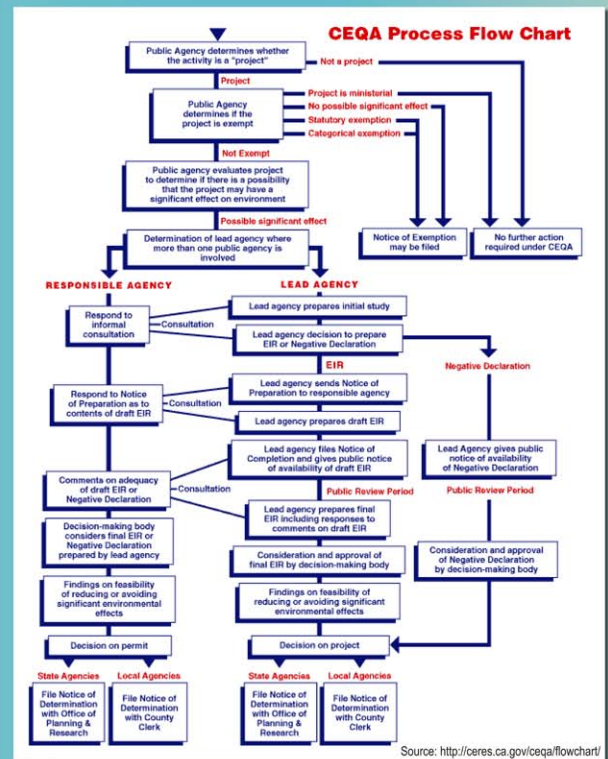
Encourage Public Participation

The CEQA process encourages and provides opportunities for public participation in the overall project planning process in one or more of the following CEQA processes:

- Scoping meetings
- Receipt of public notice
- Public/agency review and comment on Draft EIR
- Response to comments
- Legal enforcement procedures
- Citizen access to the courts

References: PRC sections 21000-21004, CCR (Guidelines) Sections 15002, 15086, 15087.

5. What is the Process/Timeline?



NID will serve as the lead agency in the CEQA process. The environmental document will likely be an EIR. The CEQA process is expected to be initiated during summer 2009, with the publication of a Notice of Preparation and Public Scoping Meeting. Depending on project complexity, an EIR typically takes 1 year to 18 months to complete.

A project website (www.NIDRegionalWTP.org) contains current project information. Public comments are also invited at public meetings, via email at info@nidregionalwtp.org or via mail to NID.

6. How can I get involved?

Therefore, NID recommends you:

- Monitor the project website
- Sign up on the mailing list
- Attend the Public Scoping Meeting
- Attend subsequent CEQA public hearings
- Review the Draft EIR and Final EIR submit comments