

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE CITY OF BIG BEAR LAKE WATER SYSTEM CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 intends to award a grant to the City of Big Bear Lake, in accordance with the Consolidated Appropriations Act of FY2008, the Omnibus Appropriations Act of FY2009, and the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of FY2010 for water system infrastructure improvements. In these appropriations acts, Congress provided a total of \$2,168,000 to EPA to fund drinking water infrastructure for Big Bear Lake. The United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA) is also providing funding for the proposed project

EPA Region 9's award of a grant for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§4321-4370f. In compliance with NEPA; Council of Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 CFR §§1500.1–1508.28; and EPA NEPA regulations, 40 CFR Part 6, EPA is proposing to adopt the environmental assessment (EA) issued by USDA on April, 2010 (Attachment 1). Subsequent to the EA prepared by USDA, EPA engaged in additional consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act related to the proposed project. EPA has prepared a supplemental environmental assessment (SEA) to address the results of the additional consultation (Attachment 2). This finding of no significant impact (FONSI) documents EPA Region 9's decision that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

EPA is releasing the USDA EA and SEA for public review and comment.

### **Project Location and Description**

The Environmental Assessment evaluates the environmental effects of the proposed Big Bear Lake Water System Capital Improvement Programs. The proposed project consists of the construction and installation of a combination of new wells and conveyance facilities, specifically the installation of new and replacement transmission and distribution system pipelines.

The Big Bear Lake Department of Water and Power intends to drill a total of six wells within the Big Bear Lake, Moonridge, and Fawnskin areas. The drilling and development of each production well will take approximately 3 to 4 weeks. The area around the well sites will be disturbed to the least extent possible (typically 100' x 100') and, after the well installation is completed, the temporarily disturbed areas will be returned to present conditions. Additionally, the proposed project includes the installation of approximately 37,121 linear feet of water distribution pipeline. The

proposed pipelines will range in size from 8 to 12-inches in diameter. Each pipeline will be installed by opening a trench about 60-inches wide and up to 10-feet deep along the proposed alignment; installing the new water pipeline; and then closing the trench, including compacting the soil cover to meet compaction requirements established to protect the pipeline. Construction equipment required for pipe installation would include, but not be limited to, the following: two excavators, two loaders, one crane, one dozer, one air compressor, one welder, one water pump, one water truck, and one generator.

The Department's service area affected by this proposed action is located generally in the Bear Valley area within the San Bernardino Mountains in San Bernardino County. The Bear Valley area includes approximately 135 square miles of unincorporated area surrounding the City of Big Bear Lake. The area is entirely surrounded by the San Bernardino National Forest. The Big Bear community is located in an approximate 12-mile long valley with an average elevation of 7,200 feet above sea level. The Valley is surrounded by mountain ridges and rugged slopes. Land surface elevations range from 6,000 to 9,900 feet. The elevation of Big Bear Lake itself is 6,740 feet. Big Bear Lake has a surface area of approximately 10 square miles and 23 miles of shoreline.

#### Purpose and Need for Proposed Project

This project consists of the construction of new wells and the installation of new and replacement transmission pipelines. The pipelines being replaced are older, undersized water lines in poor condition due to age, poor installation, and extensive corrosion. The new wells are needed to provide adequate flows. The new pipelines and associated wells will enable the City to provide clean, safe, and reliable drinking water to the residents. This project will help create a drinking water system that is less likely to fail and contaminate drinking water for consumers.

#### Environmental Consequences and Conditions

The EA examines the potential environmental impacts and includes a no action alternative to the proposed project. The only alternatives given full consideration are the proposed project and the no action alternative. Alternative alignments and a reduced amount of new or replacement water infrastructure were considered but not given full consideration because they would not meet project objectives and would not reduce the potential negative environmental effects, such as not replacing deteriorating drinking water lines, versus completing the entire proposed project.

Mitigation measures for the proposed project are set forth on pages 70 to 73 of the EA. The mitigation measures established in the EA for the proposed project are enforceable under this FONSI.

The USDA received three comments on the EA published on April 2010. The complete comments and responses are attached (Attachments 3 - 5) and summarized below:

1) The State Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse sent a letter that states the project complied with the review requirements pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Response: USDA acknowledged the letter from the State Office of Planning and Research.

2) The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) sent a letter stating it is responsible for issuing water supply permits. The CDPH will need to issue a new or amended water supply permit to the project. The CDPH will be a “responsible agency” pursuant to CEQA. The CDPH identified the six wells for the project. Additionally, the CDPH requested a copy of the City Council Resolution or Memo adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration and approving the project.

Response: The Big Bear Lake Department of Water and Power will be complying and providing the necessary information to the CDPH.

3) The County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works and Flood Control District (DPW-FCD) sent a letter expressing concerns that the project may affect the Grout Creek, Rathbone Creek, and Sand Canyon Creek. The DPW-FCD also noted that the recommendations in the EA are general in nature and the DPW-FCD recommendations are site specific. The DPW-FCD also noted that permits need to be obtained for any activity on the DPW-FCD right of way. The DPW-FCD also mentioned that other permits may be required and recommends the establishment of adequate provisions for intercepting and conducting accumulated drainage that does not adversely affect adjacent or downstream properties. The DPW-FCD recommended the most current FEMA regulations be enforced by the city.

Response: The proposed facilities will take place within existing roadways with the exception of the Grout Creek. The well site in the Grout Creek 100-year flood zone is on private property and will either be elevated above the 100-year flood hazard elevation or hardened so the well head is protected from flood hazards. The City of Big Bear Lake will obtain other permits if needed and use the mitigation measures implemented for capturing and diverting runoff. Facilities located within the flood plain will meet the most current FEMA regulations.

Subsequent to USDA’s preparation of the EA, EPA consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office as to the potential effects of the proposed project on historic properties. The SHPO concurred with EPA’s finding that the proposed project would have no adverse affect on historic properties.

After carefully considering the regulatory, environmental (both natural and human) and socio-economic factors described in the EA and SEA, EPA Region 9 has not identified any significant impacts to the environment that would result from the implementation of this project.

## Public Review

The EA, SEA, and FONSI are on file and available for public review at the EPA Region 9 Southern California Field office. To make an appointment to review the documents contact Howard Kahan at the address given below. In addition, the documents will be posted on the EPA website at <http://www.epa.gov/region09/nepa/epa-generated.html>.

The EA is also available for public review at the following location:

Big Bear Department of Water and Power  
41972 Garstin Drive  
Big Bear Lake, CA 92315

Interested parties may submit comments on the EA, SEA and this unsigned FONSI to EPA Region 9 by 5:00 p.m. on May 6, 2011. Comments via letter, fax, or email should be sent to Howard Kahan at the following address:

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U.S. EPA, Region 9  
Southern California Field Office  
600 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 1460  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
Telephone: (213) 244-1819  
Fax: (213) 244-1850  
E-mail: [kahan.howard@epa.gov](mailto:kahan.howard@epa.gov)

EPA Region 9 will not take administrative action on the proposed project prior to the close of the comment period. If, after considering public comments, EPA Region 9 concludes the proposed project will not have significant environmental impacts, EPA Region 9 will revise this FONSI by adding a summary of the comments received and EPA Region 9's responses. The revised FONSI will be forwarded to the Water Division Director for review and signature. The FONSI will be final upon signature. EPA Region 9 will not recirculate the signed FONSI for public review, but will make it available to any individual upon request.