



NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A DRAFT PROGRAM EIR FOR PUBLIC REVIEW FOR THE REPLENISH BIG BEAR PROGRAM

Notice is Hereby Given that the Big Bear Area Regional Wastewater Agency (BBARWA), as the Lead Agency, has completed a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR), pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines, for the Replenish Big Bear Program (Program)(State Clearinghouse # 2022110595).

Program Location: The Program will span just east of Big Bear Lake to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) at Baldwin Lake and then south to Shay Pond, and southeast of Big Bear Lake to the Bear Mountain Ski Resort Storage Pond and Sand Canyon Recharge Area. Each of these elements are discussed in further detail below. The Program is located within several USGS 7.5-minute topographic maps, including the following: Big Bear City, CA; Big Bear Lake, CA Moonridge, CA; and, San Geronio, CA. The central point for this Program is the BBARWA WWTP site, for which the geographic coordinates of the proposed project are 34.268906°, -116.815575°, which is located in Section 7, Township 2 North, Range 2 East of the Big Bear City, CA USGS 7.5-minute topographic map.

Program Description: The Program includes permitting, design, and construction of an Advanced Water Purification Facility (AWPF) at the existing BBARWA WWTP, about 6.59 miles of pipeline for Program Water and reverse osmosis (RO), brine minimization, three pump stations, groundwater recharge, and up to four monitoring wells to implement a Program that would retain recycled water in the Big Bear Valley for beneficial use to increase the sustainability of local water supplies. The Program is currently estimated to produce approximately 1,950 acre-feet per year (AFY) of high-quality Program Water, and may produce up to 2,200 AFY by 2040 through utilization of a high-recovery brine minimization technology. The Program includes the following uses and benefits:

- Sustain Stanfield Marsh Habitat and Increase Educational Opportunities: By providing a consistent water source to Stanfield Marsh through the discharge of Program Water to Stanfield Marsh, the habitat therein would be sustained, and educational opportunities for the community and visitors would be created;
- Enhance Big Bear Lake Benefits: The Program would discharge Program Water to Stanfield Marsh, allowing the Program Water to flow through Stanfield Marsh and provide new inflow to Big Bear Lake. The Program will increase inflows and Lake level, thereby enhancing recreational opportunities and aquatic habitat in both Big Bear Lake and Stanfield Marsh, and would support water quality improvements;
- Expand Local Water Supplies: When there is space in the groundwater basin to increase water levels and there is available Program Water stored in Big Bear Lake, Program Water could be pumped to Sand Canyon to recharge the groundwater basin to strengthen the sustainability of the groundwater basin;
- Sustain Unarmored Threespine Stickleback Fish with Program Water: To sustain the habitat for the Federally listed Unarmored Threespine Stickleback (Stickleback) fish with a new sustainable water source, Program Water will be discharged to Shay Pond in place of potable groundwater.



The following significant impacts would result from the implementation of the proposed Program:

1. Agricultural & Forestry Resources (specifically Agricultural Resources): The Program will reduce the water discharged to the Lucerne Valley Site (LV Site) which will cause some of the current farmed area to lie fallow in the future, resulting in the loss of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. This loss is considered a significant impact.

2. Biological Resources: The Baldwin Lake Pipeline Alignment Option, one of four alignment options, would likely adversely impact the bird-foot checkerbloom, a State and Federal endangered plant species. Thus, if the Baldwin Lake Pipeline Alignment Option is selected, mitigation would be necessary to minimize impacts but mitigation would not fully eliminate adverse impacts to the species and, as such, a significant impact on this species may occur.

3. Hydrology & Water Quality: As the BBARWA effluent is of better quality for nitrate and TDS than the downgradient groundwater, the continued discharge would not degrade the water quality of the Lucerne Valley Basin. However, because the BBARWA effluent is of better quality than the downgradient groundwater for nitrate and TDS, it may be currently acting as a minor source of dilution. Therefore, the reduced discharge to LV Site, as a result of the Program, has the potential to contribute to water quality degradation in the Lucerne Valley Basin by removing a dilution source, thereby resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact. The groundwater at the monitoring wells downgradient of the LV Site currently exceeds the drinking water standards for TDS (recommended) and nitrate, so the reduced flow would not be a direct cause of the exceedances. In addition, the Program has the potential to reduce the groundwater recharge of the Lucerne Valley Basin due to the reduction in discharge to the LV Site, thereby resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact. As such, impacts on Hydrology and Water Quality are considered significant and unavoidable.

4. Utilities & Service Systems: As discussed above, the construction of the Baldwin Lake Pipeline Alignment Option may affect bird-foot checkerbloom, resulting in a significant impact on this species. In addition, the reduction in discharge to the LV Site has the potential to impact the amount of water expected to be recharged to the Lucerne Valley Basin on an annual basis, thereby impacting water supplies for users of the Lucerne Valley Basin, resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact. As such, impacts under Utilities and Service Systems are considered significant and unavoidable.

Review Period and Comments: In accordance with CEQA, comments on the Program DPEIR must be received by BBARWA no later than 45 days after publication of this notice. The review period for the Program DPEIR is from December 21, 2023, to February 5, 2024. We request that comments on the Program DPEIR be received no later than February 5, 2024. Electronic copies of the entire Program DPEIR can be accessed at: <https://www.replenishbigbear.com/eir-process>. Additionally, a copy will be available at BBARWA's offices, the address for which is listed below, and at the San Bernardino County Library Big Bear Lake Branch located at 41930 Garstin Drive, Big Bear Lake, CA 92315. Any person wishing to comment on the DPEIR may provide written comments to:

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Notification of the date, time, and place of future public hearings regarding this Program will be provided in compliance with all applicable public noticing requirements.