

# INYO/LOS ANGELES STANDING COMMITTEE

*Dedicated to the advancement of mutual cooperation*



## MEMORANDUM

Date: November 3, 2021

To: Inyo/Los Angeles Standing Committee

From: Inyo County and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power staff

Subject: Item 5. Progress report on evaluation of McNally Ponds and Pasture Project.

### **Background**

The McNally Ponds and Native Pasture E/M Project was developed in the 1980s and included as mitigation in the Long Term Water Agreement's 1991 EIR for significant adverse vegetation decreases and changes in Laws due to a combination of factors. The project description was provided in the Laws/Poleta Area E/M Projects CEQA Initial Study:

*Approximately 60 acres of ponds located south of the Lower McNally Canal and west of U.S. Highway 6, will be provided water annually during the waterfowl season September through January. Water will be diverted through existing ditches and headgates from the Lower McNally Canal. (Section 17, T6S, R33E).*

*Approximately 300 acres of native pasture will be provided water from existing diversion from the Lower McNally Canal within Sections 16 and 35, T6S, R33E, and MDB&M during the growing season April through September.*

At its October 15, 2020 meeting, the Standing Committee concurred with the Inyo and LADWP staff recommendation:

*Staff recommends that the Technical Group prepare a report to the Standing Committee evaluating the McNally Ponds portion of the E/M project including possible improvements or alternatives to the project.*

### **Evaluation Progress**

A report is being prepared by Inyo and LADWP staff to evaluate the management and ecological conditions of the McNally ponds and an alternate area near Farmer's Pond Environmental Project approximately two miles from the McNally ponds. No substantive changes or alteration of the pastures that are part of the McNally E/M project are being considered (timing of water delivery to one pasture located near the ponds will be coordinated by LADWP and the leasee). Management options to improve habitat and ensure the E/M project accomplishes the mitigation goals described in the Water Agreement and 1991 EIR may be included in the report. One requirement for the evaluation is that the water supply for any suggested modifications to

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the project must be secure and the management operations sustainable to ensure the project provides optimal habitat and recreational benefits for the amount of groundwater supplied. To comply with CEQA, suggested modifications to the project must provide equal or greater mitigation value than the current project.

Inyo and LADWP staff cooperatively designed the components and methods for the evaluation including an examination of management operations, pumping effects, consistency with existing regulatory and legal requirements, and existing ecological conditions and habitat benefits for the existing project location and alternative. Inyo and LADWP staff have completed the technical analyses and a draft of the report is in preparation. The intent is to have a report considered by the Technical Group in advance of the next scheduled Standing Committee meeting, probably early 2022.