

INTRODUCTION

This draft environmental impact report (DEIR) for the Feather River Levee Repair Project (FRLRP) evaluates three potential alternatives, each of which would correct identified deficiencies in the left (east) bank levee of the Feather River and the left (south) bank levee of the Yuba River. (References to the “left” or “right” bank levee indicate the left or right side of the river when facing downstream.) The alternatives evaluated are as follows:

- ▶ *Alternative 1 – The Levee Strengthening Alternative.* Under this alternative, levee repair and strengthening activities would be completed along the entire length of FRLRP project Segments 1, 2, and 3 (Figure 2-3, “FRLRP Project Area,” in Chapter 2, “Introduction”).
- ▶ *Alternative 2 – The Levee Strengthening and ASB Setback Levee Alternative.* Under this alternative, levee repair and strengthening activities would be completed along project Segments 1 and 3. Repair and strengthening activities in these segments would be the same as for Alternative 1. In project Segment 2, a setback levee would be constructed roughly following the Above Star Bend (ASB) setback levee alignment identified in the environmental impact report (EIR) for the Yuba-Feather Supplemental Flood Control Project (Y-FSFCP).
- ▶ *Alternative 3 – The Levee Strengthening and Intermediate Setback Levee Alternative.* Under this alternative, the same levee repair and strengthening activities described for Alternatives 1 and 2 would be conducted in project Segments 1 and 3. In Segment 2, a setback levee would be constructed along an alignment between the ASB setback levee and the existing levee, allowing less land to be placed in the new floodway than under Alternative 2. The general design, construction, and operational characteristics of an intermediate setback levee under Alternative 3 would be the same as for the ASB setback levee under Alternative 2.

The environmental impacts of the three alternatives are analyzed in this chapter at an equal level of detail. The impacts of Alternative 1 are discussed first, followed by the impacts of Alternatives 2 and 3. For each section in this chapter, where impacts of Alternatives 2 and/or 3 are similar to those described under an earlier impact discussion within the section, this is noted in the text.

As described in Chapter 2, “Introduction,” this document is a “project” EIR. There is the potential to partially tier this FRLRP EIR from the Y-FSFCP EIR, which was certified by Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA) in March 2004. Partial tiering from the Y-FSFCP EIR (i.e., the first-tier document) is possible because the EIR evaluated the environmental effects of an ASB setback levee similar to that considered under Alternatives 2 and 3 in this FRLRP EIR (i.e., the second-tier document). However, because the FRLRP and Y-FSFCP EIRs have two different lead agencies under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority [TRLIA] and YCWA, respectively), and because the Y-FSFCP EIR does not evaluate many of the levee strengthening components included in the FRLRP, it was determined that preparation of an independent project EIR for the FRLRP, rather than a tiered

EIR, would be a clearer and more straightforward approach. However, much of the information in the Y-FSFCP EIR is still applicable to the FRLRP, and the Y-FSFCP EIR is incorporated by reference into the FRLRP EIR (see Section 2.8, “Documents Incorporated by Reference”).

ORGANIZATION OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter is divided into 13 sections, each evaluating a separate resource topic:

- 5.1 Land Use
- 5.2 Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- 5.3 Water Resources and River Geomorphology
- 5.4 Fisheries
- 5.5 Terrestrial Biological Resources
- 5.6 Recreation
- 5.7 Aesthetic Resources
- 5.8 Cultural Resources
- 5.9 Air Quality
- 5.10 Noise
- 5.11 Transportation and Circulation
- 5.12 Public Services, Utilities, and Service Systems
- 5.13 Paleontological Resources

Each of these sections includes the following subsections:

- ▶ “Regulatory Setting” describes pertinent federal, state, and local laws and regulations that may apply to the FRLRP.
- ▶ “Environmental Setting” presents the existing regional and local environmental setting in accordance with Section 15125 of the State CEQA Guidelines. This information constitutes the baseline conditions with which the effects of the proposed levee strengthening and, for Alternatives 2 and 3, levee setback and associated features are compared.
- ▶ “Environmental Impacts” is organized as follows:
 - “Thresholds of Significance” identifies the significance thresholds used to determine the significance of potential impacts. While the thresholds are generally based on CEQA guidance, they also encompass the factors taken into account under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to determine the significance of an action in terms of its context and the intensity of its effects. Thus, this EIR can be used as the basis of NEPA documentation that may be required in association with federal authorizations for the project.
 - “Impact Analysis” describes the analysis method and discusses the potential effects of the three project alternatives, with emphasis on significant impacts, in accordance with Sections 15126.2(a) and 15143 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Project impacts are numbered sequentially for the three project alternatives in each resource section, with “LS” denoting an impact of The Levee Strengthening Alternative (Alternative 1), “ASB” denoting an impact of The Levee Strengthening and ASB Setback Levee Alternative

(Alternative 2), and “IS” denoting an impact of The Levee Strengthening and Intermediate Setback Levee Alternative (Alternative 3).

- ▶ “Mitigation Measures” describes mitigation measures recommended to reduce potentially significant effects to less-than-significant levels, in accordance with Sections 15002(a)(3), 15021(a)(2), and 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines. The number of each mitigation measure is identical to the number of the impact to which it applies. When the same mitigation measure would apply to more than one impact, the mitigation measure is repeated with the number of each impact to which it applies.
- ▶ “Impacts Remaining Significant after Mitigation” discusses whether any impacts identified as significant before mitigation would remain significant after the recommended mitigation is implemented.