Chapter 2
Purpose and Project Objectives

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is proposing the Delta Conveyance Project (project) to restore and protect the reliability of State Water Project (SWP) water deliveries and, potentially, Central Valley Project (CVP) water deliveries south of the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta (Delta) consistent with the State's Water Resilience Portfolio (California Natural Resources Agency 2020) by addressing seismic risks, sea level rise, and other reasonably foreseeable consequences of climate change and extreme weather events in a cost-effective manner. Chapter 3, *Description of the Proposed Project and Alternatives*, describes the proposed project as well as a reasonable range of potentially feasible project alternatives to meet project objectives. One of the main purposes of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) is to assess and analyze a reasonable range of alternatives that could feasibly achieve most of the basic project objectives but avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant impacts of the project. It is not the role of the Draft EIR to assess alternatives that do not meet the project objectives or to analyze other concerns not within the scope of achieving the project objectives.

2.1 Overview

The SWP is a water storage and delivery system consisting of reservoirs, aqueducts, power plants, and pumping plants extending more than 700 miles—two-thirds of the length of California.

Planned, constructed, and operated by DWR, the SWP is the nation's largest state-built, multipurpose, user-financed water project. It supplies water to more than 27 million people in northern California, the Bay Area, the San Joaquin Valley, the Central Coast, and southern California. SWP water also irrigates about 750,000 acres of farmland, mainly in the San Joaquin Valley.

The primary purpose of the SWP is to convey water to local and regional water suppliers across California that, in turn, supply end users engaged in the beneficial uses of that water; it serves as the foundation for local water supplies. The SWP was designed to deliver up to nearly 4.2 million acre-feet of water per year, depending on hydrologic conditions. The SWP has long-term contracts to supply water to 29 public water agencies that distribute it to farms, homes, and industry. Water supply depends on rainfall, snowpack, runoff, water in storage facilities, and pumping capacity from the Delta, as well as operational limits for fish and wildlife protection, water quality, and environmental and legal restrictions. The infrastructure that enables the conveyance, or movement, of California's water supply is critical to the health of California's economy.

Factors such as the continuing subsidence of lands, risk of seismic activity and levee failures within the Delta, sea level rise, precipitation change, warmer temperatures, and wider variations in hydrologic conditions associated with climate change threaten the reliability of the current SWP water conveyance system.[1] Additionally, as explained in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, Section 1.2.3.4, *Regulatory Environment*, pumping restrictions applied by regulatory agencies to address water quality and aquatic species concerns at the south Delta diversion continue to prevent the SWP from

[1] Chapter 30, *Climate Change*, of this Draft EIR discusses global, national, and statewide climate change trends and their implications for the Delta Conveyance Project.

reliably capturing water when it is available, especially from storm events. Constraints on groundwater use imposed by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 could also increase the need for reliable SWP surface water supplies over time.

DWR's proposal of the Delta Conveyance Project is informed by past efforts undertaken to address the long-standing issues the SWP faces, including those undertaken through the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, the Delta Risk Management Strategy, and the Bay Delta Conservation Plan/California WaterFix planning process. The need for new Delta water conveyance infrastructure to help achieve the State's coequal goals of "providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem" (Pub. Resources Code § 29702(a)) was recognized by the legislature when it adopted the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 (Water Code § 85000 *et seq*., discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.3.1, *California Water Supply*, and Section 1.2.4.4, *The Bay Delta Conservation Plan and California WaterFix*).

2.2 Regulatory Background

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an EIR contain a "statement of the objectives sought by the proposed project." "[A] clearly written statement of objectives will help the lead agency develop a reasonable range of alternatives to evaluate in the EIR and will aid the decision makers in preparing findings or a statement of overriding considerations. The statement of objectives should include the underlying purpose of the project and may discuss the project benefits" (CEQA Guidelines § 15124(b)). The project objectives are a statement of the reasons DWR is proposing the Delta Conveyance Project and what objectives the project is intended to achieve. The following section presents project objectives in compliance with CEQA requirements.

2.3 Project Purpose and Objectives

DWR's fundamental purpose in proposing to develop new diversion and conveyance facilities in the Delta is to restore and protect the reliability of SWP water deliveries and, potentially, CVP water deliveries south of the Delta, consistent with the State's Water Resilience Portfolio in a cost-effective manner.

The above stated purpose, in turn, gives rise to several related objectives of the Delta Conveyance Project, as follows.

- To help address anticipated rising sea levels and other reasonably foreseeable consequences of climate change and extreme weather events.
- To minimize the potential for public health and safety impacts from reduced quantity and quality of SWP water deliveries, and potentially CVP water deliveries, south of the Delta as a result of a major earthquake that could cause breaching of Delta levees and the inundation of brackish water into the areas where existing SWP and CVP pumping plants operate in the southern Delta.
- To protect the ability of the SWP, and potentially the CVP, to deliver water when hydrologic conditions result in the availability of sufficient amounts of water, consistent with the requirements of state and federal law, including the California and federal Endangered Species

Acts and Delta Reform Act, as well as the terms and conditions of water delivery contracts and other existing applicable agreements.

- To provide operational flexibility to improve aquatic conditions in the Delta and better manage risks of further regulatory constraints on project operations.