Appendix A: Comments and Responses Groundwater Actions to Offset Surface Water Diversions from the Sacramento River in Response to Drought in 2021

Thaddeus Bettner (Glen-Colusa Irrigation District)

Comment:

Reclamation "may fund if federal funding is available" and you are "partially" funding

Response:

Text has been added to clarify some aspects of the Proposed Action.

Darrin Williams

Comment:

1. **Effect to Groundwater Levels** -The document describes the need for additional groundwater pumping due to the extremely dry hydrologic conditions of 2021. It continues in Section titled "Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences" to list all resources unaffected and eliminated from further analysis but fails to consider the most important resource directly affected by this program, which is the groundwater. Surface water supplies are currently stretched to the maximum as we all know. With respect to groundwater, current standing water levels have dropped below 2014-2015 historic lows. A significant number of domestic wells have lost water with more added to the list daily. Across the west side of Colusa County and extending down into Yolo County Agricultural wells are experiencing record declines necessitating lowering of pumps and in some cases loss of the well.

Response:

The EA discloses effects to groundwater in the Groundwater Resources section. Text has been added to the Groundwater Resources section of EA.

Comment:

2. **Permit Required** - The plan establishes a groundwater substitution transfer which requires a permit issued by the Colusa County Groundwater Commission. Chapter 43 of the Colusa County Groundwater Management Plan clearly defines when a permit is required: "*It shall be unlawful to extract groundwater underlying lands in Colusa County for any groundwater transfer use outside county boundaries, without first obtaining a permit as provided herein. (Ord. No. 615, (part): Ord. No. 770, § 1 (Exh. A) (part). Formerly 43-3.)"*

The purpose of the permit requirement is described in section 43-3 paragraph (a): *"It is essential for information gathering and monitoring purposes to have a process for administrative review of the extraction of groundwater for any transfer purposes within the county."*

Response:

The Proposed Action is not transferring water out of the basin. The Proposed Action is not a water transfer program.

The EA discloses the relevant environmental effects of the Proposed Action. Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

3. **Subversion of Overlying Rights** – The SRSC's included in the plan are exercising an Appropriative Right with respect to groundwater extraction. The water pumped is not part of a groundwater recharge project, it is not banked, stored, or confined in any manner. Therefore, in times of deficit they must subordinate themselves to Overlying Right holders. Individual Land Owners within the SRSC's boundaries may at their discretion invest in wells and exercise their **Overlying** right to supplement their needs.

Response:

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

4. **Inappropriate Use of Taxpayer Funds** – It is troubling that taxpayer dollars would be used to exacerbate a diminishing groundwater resource in times of drought. It would be a wiser use of funds to assist those who have lost their access to clean drinking water as a result of current conditions.

Response:

Comment does not address the adequacy of the NEPA analysis.

Comment:

In closing, I would like to add that I understand all of the challenges we as water users face in 2021. I believe during these times we must follow local plans and ordinances which are designed to provide transparency, bolster communication, and assist building future programs.

Response:

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Michael Billiou

Comment:

During pumping in 2011-2015, GCID and DWR repeatedly assured the public that their "conjunctive use" pumping would only affect the deep 1000'-1200' Tuscan aquifer, because this level is confined by a "impermeable rock cap". It was stated that the other levels above it (B, C, D: aka 2, 3, 4) would be isolated from, and unaffected by the pumping.

Monitoring well 22N01W29N000M data clearly show that the pumping in that deep strata has affected the 600' B level above it.

Subtle inflection points in the 600' standing water level data, show when a change in hydraulic head has occurred. Why these points coincide exactly with pumping period starts and stops, remain unexplained.

Excessive drawdowns in this B level that occurred in pumping periods from 3/18/11 to 11/17/11, 7/1/13 to 9/25/13, and 6/17/15 to 7/12/15 are obvious, yet also ignored and unexplained.

The hydraulic head in the A (and B Level) provides critical support to the overlying C and D (350' and ±100') aquifer levels.

When water is pumped from the deep levels, this reduction in head slowly telegraphs upward, and lower the C and D levels. Over the 2011 to 2015 pumping period, the C and D levels both dropped 8 feet. There is not supposed to be any influence on the B, C or D levels due to this deep pumping. Yet it looks like there are.

Response:

Under the Proposed Action, groundwater pumping is estimated up to approximately 60,000-acre-feet (AF) for in-basin uses (not exported out of the area of origin). On average, groundwater pumping accounts for greater than 2.25 million AF of water supply needs in the Sacramento River Valley. In critical years this amount groundwater pumping can account for as much as 4.45 million AF. 60,000 AF proposed by the voluntary program is well within the range of historic pumping patterns for the region. The volume of groundwater pumping under the Proposed Action is within the range of pumping patterns relative to the total groundwater pumping within the Redding Area and Sacramento Valley groundwater basins where the voluntary groundwater pumping is proposed. Text has been added to the Groundwater Resources section of EA to reflect this clarification. Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

GCID's engineers have reported that each of the GCID production wells affect other private pumpers up to a four mile radius. The graphic I produced is more generous and shows what a three mile radius encompasses: 48,900 acres less a little GCID land. These areas are again experiencing serious problems in 2021.

We have already been damaged by the loss of recharge, as the pumped water is exported out of the area of origin. We have had to lower pumps and drill new wells. The residential water well situation in Glenn County is critical.

Starting in 2010, subsidence due to deep water pumping has cracked and damaged our historic brick and beam ranch house. It can't be mitigated.

Response:

Under the Proposed Action, groundwater pumping is estimated up to approximately 60,000-acre-feet (AF) for in-basin uses (not exported out of the area of origin). On average groundwater pumping accounts for greater than 2.25 million AF of water supply needs in the Sacramento River Valley. In critical years this amount groundwater pumping can account for as much as 4.45 million AF. 60,000 AF proposed by the voluntary program is well within the range of historic pumping patterns for the region. The volume of groundwater pumping under the Proposed Action is within the range of pumping patterns relative to the total groundwater pumping within the Redding Area and Sacramento Valley groundwater basins where the voluntary groundwater pumping is proposed. Therefore, a regional approach for groundwater monitoring is proposed to address adverse

groundwater level effects associated with the Proposed Action. Additional, Reclamation has enhanced its mitigation measure EC 1 that provides for 3rd party complaints as to individual well performance would allow Reclamation to shutdown specific wells if they are expected to be contributing to the performance of a complaint well. The combined regional and local mitigation efforts will ensure groundwater levels continue to support groundwater dependent ecosystems where appropriate, continued performance of 3rd party wells, and not contribute to regional land subsidence.

Text has been added to the Groundwater Resources section of EA to reflect this clarification.

Comment:

I believe that allowing this project will further exacerbate an already stressed aquifer system, and continue to damage the residents that live here.

Response:

Text has been added to the Groundwater Resources section of EA to reflect this clarification. Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Dante John Nomellini Sr submitted comments on behalf of Central Delta Water Agency (CDWA)

Comment:

The current drought crisis is in great part triggered by the failure of the CVP and SWP to limit exports of water in prior years to that which is truly surplus to the present and future needs of the Delta and other areas of origin including the watershed of the Sacramento River which includes the Delta.

Response:

The effects of the Proposed Action, including cumulative effects, are considered in the EA.

Comment:

BACKGROUND

Response:

The commenter provided background information on Water Code, laws, regulations, and other historical information. The comment does not address the adequacy of the NEPA analysis.

Comment:

The EA at issue here analyzes a completely different federal action, and so it may not tier from these other NEPA documents prepared for separate programs.

Response:

This EA does not tier from existing documents. Text has been added to the EA to reflect this clarification.

Comment:

Here, the EA provides an inaccurate description of the federal action that Reclamation may arbitrarily constrict in scope for the sole purpose of avoiding disclosure of significant environmental impacts.

Response:

Text has been added to clarify some aspects of the Proposed Action. The EA discloses the relevant environmental effects of the Proposed Action.

Comment:

In other words, the EA suggests that Reclamation has no authority to ensure that groundwater extraction is reduced or stopped, and so the SRSCs may simply disregard Reclamation's direction in flagrant disregard on MM1.

Response:

Funding provided by Reclamation would be subject to an agreement outlining the terms required by Reclamation. Participants will be required to comply with the terms of the Proposed Action, or they will not receive funding. Furthermore, non-compliant participants would be required to pay appropriate fees to reschedule water, which act as a deterrent.

An example of a response letter to groundwater actions is attached as Appendix B.

Comment:

The Bureau has failed to comply with its duty to analyze the effectiveness of proposed mitigation.

Response:

Text in the EA discusses the Environmental Commitments and how the measures ensure participants under the Proposed Action monitor groundwater actions to reduce and minimize impacts to groundwater resources.

Comment:

The EA's conclusory analysis of cumulative effects is patently defective.

Response:

Cumulative effects are disclosed in the Cumulative Effects section of the EA. Text has been added to clarify this section.

Comment:

The EA fails to include any analysis regarding the potential impacts to Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems ("GDEs").

Response:

Text has been added to the Biological Resources section of the EA.

Comment:

This statement regarding the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo is a material mischaracterization because the Action Area overlaps directly, and is adjacent to, four of the participants, with a fifth

participant just downstream of the habitat. In addition, VELB is found throughout the "Action Area" and the specific impacts of this project is also not analyzed.

Response:

Text on Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo critical habitat has been clarified in the Biological Resources section of the EA. Text on valley elderberry longhorn beetle (VELB) and GDEs has been added to the Biological Resources section of the EA.

Comment:

Without a detailed analysis of the groundwater use, volumes and timing, there is no means by which the impacts to these and other federal and State listed species can be determined. Further, without adequate mitigation and monitoring, it is likely that these impacts would individually and in aggregate significantly impact the environment.

Response:

The maximum amount of groundwater to be pumped is 60,000 AF, and this pilot project is from August through October. Cumulative impacts are discussed in the Cumulative Effects Section of the EA.

Comment:

The proposed monitoring of regional groundwater levels is not connected to these impacts and in no way can be applied to see how a GDE is being influenced and to what degree that influence is a negative impact.

Response:

The pilot/demonstration wells would follow a regional approach to monitoring wells through the DWR network using telemetry or other methods of monitoring and specific triggers to avoid over pumping and water quality impacts and ensure a more conservative approach than those included in the LWT Program.

Comment:

The limited discussion of impacts to GDEs relies on the LWT EIS/EIR, which claims that groundwater levels more than 15 feet below ground surface would not likely affect overlying terrestrial resources. In addition, the EA claims that plant communities have the ability to adjust and accommodate the change given the slow rate. (EA, p.13)

Yet, fifteen feet is significantly shallower than the 80 feet that may apply for Valley Oaks, for instance, a common GDE species in the pumping area.

Response:

GDE analysis and text have been added to the Biological Resources Section of the EA.

Comment:

The EA ignores all of these publicly available resources regarding GDEs found in the Action Area, and then states that essentially regardless, the rate of decline of the water table will be "slow" enough. All of this is asserted without defining which ecosystem, where, at what groundwater level, and what rate. Without any scientific corroboration, the EA fails meet Best

Available Science and has the potential to directly impact federally listed species and designated Critical Habitat.

Response:

Text has been added to the Biological Resources section of the EA.

Comment:

In addition, mitigation should be required to assess vegetation conditions associated with use by Special Status species as a part of the baseline, and require monitoring of that vegetation and groundwater elevations specifically associated with GDEs. This must be done before and after the reductions in the water table.

Response:

GDE analysis and text have been added to the Biological Resources Section of the EA.

Comment:

The GDE impacts analysis is incomplete and the conclusions in the EA are unsupported with respect to GDEs. The shallow water table that GDEs are connected to within the project area may be significantly and unavoidably impacted by the project.

Response:

Text and GDE analysis have been added to the Biological Resources section of the EA.

Comment:

The proposed project adds significant impacts to the impacts previously analyzed in the referenced tiered NEPA documents requiring additional review.

Response:

Text has been clarified to explain how the previous documents are incorporated by reference. The Proposed Action is not tiered from the previous projects.

Cumulative effects are disclosed in the Cumulative Effects section of the EA. Text has been added to clarify this section.

Comment:

The relationship to the "committed water transfers" remains unexplained. Is the additional groundwater pumping required because CVP water is being transferred or because transfer water is being delivered by the CVP?

Response:

The Proposed Action is not transferring water out of the basin and it is not a transfer program. Under the Proposed Action, there will be an increased use of groundwater to irrigate crops instead of diversion of CVP water supplies from the Sacramento River. Reclamation will continue to operate as described in the 2019 Long-Term Operation of the CVP and SWP (LTO) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS). Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

The analysis of alternatives is artificially limited. An obvious alternative is to meet the needs of the uses to be met by the additional groundwater pumping with the groundwater pumping that otherwise is committed to transfer and/or legally stored CVP water not carried over in storage. The priority for use of any water to be exported should be within the watershed.

Response:

The Proposed Action is not transferring water out of the basin. Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws. The EA discloses the relevant environmental effects of the Proposed Action.

Comment:

An appropriate EIS/EIR should be prepared to properly analyze the specific and cumulative impacts of the multitude of CVP and SWP current and proposed operations including the ability to meet regulatory requirements, meet the needs of senior water rights, provide adequate salinity control for the Delta and maintain sustainability of the groundwater basins.

Response:

Reclamation has determined the Proposed Action does not have the potential for significant impacts to the affected environment and will sign a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in accordance with NEPA.

Reclamation is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Cumulative effects are disclosed in the Cumulative Effects section of the EA. Text has been added to clarify this section.

Comment does not address the adequacy of this specific NEPA analysis. Operation of Shasta Reservoir is consistent with the 2019 LTO EIS and ROD.

Barbara Vlamis submitted comments on behalf of AquAlliance, California Water Impact Network, and California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (collectively "AquAlliance")

Comment:

The Project is apparently "[e]valuating the effects of Reclamation's funding of pumping additional groundwater."1 The EA asserts that "The need for the Proposed Action is to address the hydrologic conditions in 2021 by offsetting surface water diversions from the Sacramento River with groundwater pumping thereby resulting in more water for other beneficial purposes in the Sacramento Valley, including cities, farms, fish, and birds, and address difficult hydrologic conditions in 2021."2 This purported "need" doesn't pass the straight-face test because the impacts of the funding advanced in the Project combined with what it enables, the actual groundwater pumping, will be so deleterious to area-of-origin cities, farms, species, and streams.

Response:

Effects of groundwater pumping are discussed in the EA.

Comment:

Enabling the abuse of groundwater by river water-rich Settlement Contractors, particularly in a critically dry year, when other legal users of groundwater themselves need to increase pumping to maintain or start urban gardens, sustain municipal canopies, and grow agricultural crops, puts senior water right users in direct conflict with groundwater-reliant neighbors and the environment - unnecessarily.

Response:

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws. Cumulative effects are disclosed in the Cumulative Effects section of the EA. Text has been added to clarify this section.

Comment:

The EA and the extra groundwater pumping it proposes to fund are a problem of Reclamation's own making. Dry years recur often in California, and in recent history they have lasted up to six years or more. Pre-historic climate studies indicate that dry periods can occur on a scale of multiple decades or longer. In the last 103 years, there have been 11 multi-year droughts in California of large-scale extent, spanning 43 years. Over the last 20 years, Critical to Below Normal water years occurred 71.5% of the time and Above Normal to Wet water years occurred 28.5% of the time.3

Response:

Drought conditions are noted.

Comment:

Even with the knowledge of California's climate and history, Reclamation made excessive releases of water from Shasta Reservoir in April and May 2021 that enabled high spring water deliveries to CVP contractors.4 Although the water temperature of these releases was high and had minimal direct draw on the reservoir's cold-water pool, these releases may have compromised the "blanket" of warm water that overlies and helps protect Shasta Reservoir's cold-water pool. It is likely that any such compromise of the cold-water pool would be worse in warmer summer months.5 Will 60,000 acre-feet of water restore the cold-water pool? Will Reclamation use all of the 60,000 af to try and save the fish it has deliberately tried to exterminate? How much water is missing from Reclamations portfolio and how much water was moved out of Shasta Dam for contractors earlier in 2021? These and other questions are not answered in the EA, but are necessary for a full assessment of the short- and long-term effects of Reclamation engaging in a project of this type.

Response:

Operation of Shasta Reservoir is consistent with the 2019 LTO EIS and 2020 ROD. The Proposed Action will increase availability of surface water for beneficial purposes in the Sacramento Valley, including listed aquatic species, fish, birds, farms and cities.

Comment:

1. The definition of the Proposed Action is inadequate.

The EA fails to disclose how many of the water districts involved in the additional groundwater pumping in the Sacramento Valley ("Districts") are prepared to sell river water in 2021, in what quantities, and at what precise locations. In addition, some, if not all of the Districts, have already

approved so-called Emergency Groundwater Production plans ("Extra Pumping Plans"), but that is not mentioned in the EA. It is exceedingly unclear whether the groundwater pumping disclosed in the EA is what the Districts previously planned to pump in their Extra Pumping Plans or is in addition to what the Districts already approved. The EA simply fails to provide any sufficient information to ascertain the actual environmental effects of the Proposed Action.

Response:

The comment is unclear on what is described as "so-called Emergency Groundwater Production plans ("Extra Pumping Plans")".

Districts' boards may approve plans.

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable state and Federal laws. Cumulative effects are disclosed in the Cumulative Effects section of the EA. Text has been added to clarify this section.

Comment:

2. The scope of analysis is inadequate.

The EA is deficient because it fails to disclose and analyze the entire Project, the Extra Pumping Plans and the funding of such activities ("Cumulative Project"), therefore it does not comply with the requirements of National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"), 42 U.S.C. §4321 et seq. The actual groundwater pumping that the EA proposes to fund is not approved in any other National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA") document of which we are aware.

Response:

The comment is unclear on what is described as "so-called Emergency Groundwater Production plans ("Extra Pumping Plans")".

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable state and Federal laws.

Cumulative effects are disclosed in the Cumulative Effects section of the EA. Text has been added to clarify this section.

Comment:

3. Alternatives exist to meet the needs for the Proposed Action.

In May 2021 the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, Save California Salmon, and the California Water Impact Network submitted a comprehensive temperature management and operations plan to the State Water Resources Control Board for the Shasta-Trinity Division of the Central Valley Project for the months of June through October, 2021 (Exhibit A). This proposal would do more "[f]or other beneficial purposes in the Sacramento Valley, including cities, farms, fish, and birds," than the Project and Reclamations planned operations.

Response:

The comment describes an alternative that does not meet the need for the Proposed Action. These alternative actions and the response to CSPA were raised at the Thursday June 17, 2021 Sacramento River Temperature Task Group for coordination and input from agencies. Reclamation responded to the State Water Resources Control Board on June 21, 2021. This letter is attached as Appendix C.

Comment:

By including only the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative, the EA failed to consider a reasonable range of alternatives before committing to an irretrievable commitment of groundwater resources. The Proposed Action would spend significant federal funding, the opportunity cost of which should be considered, and more durable and environmentally beneficial alternatives pursued.

Response:

40 CFR §1501.5(2) provides that an EA shall "briefly discuss the purpose and need for the proposed action, alternatives as required by section 102(2)(E) of NEPA, and the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and include a listing of agencies and persons consulted." NEPA does not require an EA to have a specific range of alternatives.

Comment:

4. The EA fails to disclose and discuss the lack of right to groundwater by the Districts.

Appropriative rights to extract groundwater are junior to overlying rights.

Response:

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

This lack of analysis for the proposed 10-wells project indicated that GCID does not have a valid water right to support the extra groundwater pumping planned in 2021. AquAlliance believes this may also be true for many of the other potential beneficiaries of Reclamation's funding Project, as well. The Bureau may not legally fund illegal groundwater use.

Response:

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

In an additional vein, have the Districts' Extra Pumping Plans been separated on paper from their south-of-Delta water transfers in an attempt to obfuscate another legal quandary that makes their right to groundwater junior? The Bureau and DWR require that transfers must be "new water," as called for in their Technical Information Memorandum made available to potential sellers of water in December 2019.

Response:

All transfer water has been accounted for and is not increased by the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action is not transferring water out of the basin. Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

5. Funding projects that harm groundwater dependent farms and residences violates California law.

The Districts and contractors have failed to prevent legal injury to other groundwater users, have failed to include public trust doctrine assessments in projects with effects to surface water, and have

persistently depleted and over-drafted groundwater supplies. The Bureau cannot legally fund illegal groundwater use.

Response:

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

It should be noted that AquAlliance provided exhaustive comments addressing the declining conditions of Sacramento Valley groundwater and the effects of past use of GCID's production wells in comments on the LTWTP22 and the Long Term Operations of the CVP and SWP document.23

Response:

Comment noted. Effects of groundwater pumping associated with this Proposed Action and environmental commitments are described in the EA

Comment:

6. The Project is likely to have a cumulatively significant impact on the environment.

Response:

Cumulative effects are disclosed in the Cumulative Effects section of the EA. Text has been added to clarify this section. Reclamation is planning to sign a FONSI as no significant impacts have been found.

Comment:

7. Failure to fulfill past commitments leaves the Project and the tiering hollow.

Response:

Text has been clarified to explain how the previous documents are incorporated by reference. The Proposed Action is not tiered from the previous projects.

Comment:

8. The documents from which the EA purport to tier failed to address impacts to groundwater users and species.

The EA lacks analysis of any potential harm to fish, wildlife and other instream beneficial uses from the proposed exchange, so it is with the EA's treatment of impacts from groundwater substitution for the exchange. Reclamation fails to produce data and analysis that demonstrate that the Project or the Cumulative Project will cause no legal injury to other water users (either surface or groundwater users) nor any harm to fish, wildlife and other instream beneficial uses.

Response:

Text has been clarified to explain how the previous documents are incorporated by reference. The Proposed Action is not tiered from the previous projects.

The EA discloses the relevant environmental effects of the Proposed Action. The EA discloses effects to groundwater in the Groundwater Resources section. Additional text has been added to the Groundwater Resources and Biological Resources sections of the EA.

Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

The Technical Information memo's well acceptance criteria are instructive in regard to groundwater substitution pumping. The criteria involve proximity to streams traded off with the depth to which the well must go to draw water from the aquifer neighboring the stream. The closer the stream, the deeper the well must go before drawing water in hopes of minimizing any head difference between the location of surface water and the groundwater below in the area.

Response:

The Proposed Action is not transferring water out of the basin. The Technical Information memo described in the comment applies to water transfers. Proposed Action is not a water transfers program.

The EA discloses the relevant environmental effects of the Proposed Action. Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

The Technical Information memo does not acknowledge how far downstream or upstream of the well location this depletion extends, nor does it estimate ***how long this assumed depletion takes to attenuate.*** These would be critical to meaningful determinations of legal injury to other water users or harmful impacts to fish, wildlife, and other instream beneficial uses. They are not accounted for in the Bureau and Department's Technical Information memo, to the best of our knowledge.

Response:

The Proposed Action is not transferring water out of the basin. The Technical Information memo described in the comment applies to water transfers. The Proposed Action is not a water transfers program.

The EA discloses the relevant environmental effects of the Proposed Action. Participants under the Proposed Action must comply with applicable State and Federal laws.

Comment:

Thirteen percent is not supported with any documentation or analysis and runs counter to modeling done by CH2M HILL as reported in a memo to DWR in 2010.

Response:

The 13 percent Stream Depletion Factor (SDF) applies to water transfers. The Proposed Action is not part of a water transfer program. The EA does not describe or apply the 13 percent SDF to the Proposed Action.

Comment:

Therefore, there will most assuredly be significant impacts to streams, terrestrial, avian, and aquatic species, and other groundwater users. In typical fashion, Reclamation and the Districts will claim the Grand Experiment produced so-called science after taking a sledge hammer to an already weakened hydrologic, biologic, and community system.

Response:

The EA discloses the relevant environmental effects of the Proposed Action.

Comment:

a) If Reclamation funds the well pumping in the Project, all beneficiary Districts should be required to provide documentation of all complaints made by third parties from the beginning of their extra groundwater pumping.

Response:

Funding provided by Reclamation would be subject to an agreement outlining the terms required by Reclamation. Participants will be required to comply with the terms of the Proposed Action, or they will not receive funding. Furthermore, non-compliant participants would be required to pay appropriate fees to reschedule water, which act as a deterrent.

An example of a response letter to groundwater actions is attached as Appendix B.

Comment:

b) The EA confuses the reader by utilizing both the acronym "LTW" and "LWT" for the Long-Term Water Transfer EIS/EIR.

Response:

Edits have been made to use a consistent acronym.

Comment:

c) There is contradictory language regarding the timing of monitoring. Page 6 of the EA states that "Regional groundwater levels under the Proposed Action would be, at a minimum, monitored weekly or monthly prior to, during, and following voluntary groundwater pumping." However, Mitigation Measure 1 on page 7 states that the monitoring will occur at least monthly. AquAlliance suggests that the monitoring should be weekly, but if that is not Reclamation's goal, the reference to the possibility of weekly monitoring should be removed and the EA circulated again.

Response:

Text has been added to the EA to clarify the timing of the groundwater levels monitoring

Comment:

d) The EA hints at, but fails to ever quantify or assess, the Proposed Action's effects of increasing greenhouse gas emissions by subsidizing increased groundwater pumping.

Response:

Text has been added to the EA addressing greenhouse gas emissions and Environmental Commitment 2 – Air Quality.