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October, 1993

Final Program Environmental Impact Report

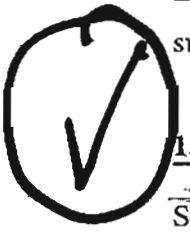
Basin Management Plan

State Clearing House No.: 9302-3035

VOLUME 1: Revised Draft EIR

Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency

executing the BMP. The No Project Alternative is defined as no remedial action. That is to say, no plans, policies, programs, or projects would be undertaken by the PVWMA or any other body or individual in the Basin. Ground water would continue to be the source of water for agricultural irrigation, industrial and commercial use, and domestic residential use. Ground water use would increase to meet higher future water demand. The Basin's overdraft condition would worsen. Seawater intrusion would continue to advance underneath the coastal lands at the current rate of 10,000 acre-feet per year or higher. Irrigation with ground water would continue along the coast area until the salt content in the soils built up to the point where agricultural crops could not grow. Domestic wells along the coast would also become unusable as the sodium content increased. No substitute water supplies would become available other than purchasing bottled water.



1.2.4 Demand Management Only Alternative = fallowing

Section 10.2.4, Demand Management Only Alternative, of the BMP contains a more detailed discussion. This alternative would use only demand management measures to achieve the Agency's water management objectives: to balance water use and supply in the Basin and progressively decrease seawater intrusion. The Basin would be brought into balance through mandatory basin-wide pumping controls only, for residential, agricultural, and industrial users. Ground water modelling has indicated that it would be necessary to reduce ground water use by 60 percent from current levels. All users in the Basin would receive only 40 percent of their current needs by the year 2040. Since municipal and industrial uses comprise 23 percent of current use, the major reduction would fall on agricultural users. In effect, this would reduce agricultural operations by 40 to 60 percent and halt or reduce current levels of municipal and industrial development (refer to the following socioeconomics discussion). This Alternative represents the most probable scenario if the State Water Resources Control Board were to intervene. State intervention would occur as a result of the PVWMA's failure to implement a BMP, which is in essence what would occur under this Alternative. The State by statutory adjudication would institute someone to regulate and oversee the appropriation of water in the Basin, resulting in stringent pumping controls.

There are however, other ways the Demand Management Alternative could be formulated which would involve the acquisition of land or water rights to meet overdraft reduction goals. The BMP considered a demand management element which involved the acquisition of land to meet overdraft reduction goals. The retirement of 6,500 acres of coastal area land from irrigated agriculture could allow long-term sustainable pumping of 50,000 AF/Yr. This water could be shared by the remaining

Basin users. Although cutbacks in water use would not be as severe as under pumping controls, it was estimated that agricultural productivity would be reduced by at least 25 percent.

It should be noted that either approach to the Demand Management Alternative would conflict with one of the primary BMP alternatives formulation criteria; provide for needs of all Basin water users. For this reason, as well as other economic and environmental reasons, demand management alternatives were not pursued further in the BMP. However, the EIR evaluates a Demand Management Alternative to meet the requirements of CEQA; analyzing a full range of alternatives, even if an alternative does not meet project objectives.

1.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impacts and mitigation measures of the BMP Alternatives, the No Project Alternative, and the Demand Management Only Alternative are summarized in Table 1-1 below and in more detail in Table 1-2 at the end of this section.

1.3.1 BMP Alternatives

In summary, most of the **BMP's Alternatives** impacts can be reduced to less than significant levels except for one-time localized losses of Important Farmland, and, in some cases, the potential for local losses of biological resources. BMP Alternatives would balance water supply with demand and reduce the annual rate of seawater intrusion by 90 percent. The annual equivalent cost of the Preferred Alternative would be $3.8 million. The annual equivalent cost of the other BMP Alternatives range from $4.1 million to $7.0 million.

In contrast the **No Project Alternative** would not balance supply and demand, would not halt seawater intrusion, could reduce the Basin's productive agricultural acreage by 3,000-6,000 acres (approximately 10-20 percent of the Basin's agricultural land), and would be a significant soils and land use impact. This could gradually reduce the Basin's economy by 10-20 percent of 1990 levels by year 2040, including the loss of 1,200-2,400 jobs, and at full impact it could cost the Basin $60.5-$121 million annually in lost agricultural revenues.

an immediate 50% reduction in water to the agricultural sector, the annual cost of such a reduction would be $504 million annually in lost economic production, including the loss of 6,000 jobs. This stands in contrast to the $3.8 million annual equivalent cost of the BMP. The cumulative cost calculated on a net present value basis at a real interest rate of 5% would be about $9 billion over the planning period. Although this Alternative would not cause a loss of Prime Farmland, it would eliminate the possibility of keeping half the acreage of the Basin in agricultural production. This would not be a significant soils impact, but it would be inconsistent with State and local land use plans and policies to support and maintain agriculture. This alternative would also be growth reducing, due to the 50% shrinkage of the Basin's economy.

5.5 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

The comparison developed in section 5.4 indicates that the Demand Management Only Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative. Of the BMP alternatives, it would appear that the significant unavoidable biological impacts divide the six alternatives into two groups, those that have significant unavoidable biological impacts – Alternatives 8, 8A, and 2 – and those that do not have them – Alternatives 5, 10, and 11. Assuming that the summary table accurately reflects the impacts of each element and alternative, then the latter set of BMP alternatives would be environmentally superior to the former set. The magnitude of the difference separating the two groups remains difficult to assess, but appears not to be large. Although significant unavoidable biological impacts may be associated with College Lake, the losses, regrettable as they may be, would be locally limited and not part of an on-going, expanding, environmentally devastating, ecosystem-wide operation.

5.6 NEW ELEMENTS

Since the preliminary screening of BMP alternatives was completed, new elements have been suggested for consideration and on-going suggestions are in the future. The requirements of a planning process and the imperative to make a decision by a given point in time inevitably result in incomplete consideration of some possibilities. However, the BMP planning process is designed to make the chances of missing an important option very small, and to accommodate subsequent suggestions as they arise. The method for accomplishing this is to consider new suggestions in relationship to the past analysis of elements. If the new suggestion is similar to an earlier element and does not contain any fundamentally new advantages, then it is considered a variation on the theme of an earlier analysis and no further review is conducted. However, if a new suggestion is