Background

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) owns and operates the Hetch Hetchy Regional Water System that delivers drinking water to 2.6 million people in Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Tuolumne and San Francisco counties.

In 2008, the SFPUC adopted the Water System Improvement Program (WSIP), to repair, replace, and seismically upgrade the Hetch Hetchy Regional Water System. The Alameda Creek Recapture Project (ACRP) is the final WSIP project to be undertaken. The Calaveras Dam Replacement Project (CDRP), another WSIP project, which was designed to restore the historic storage capacity of Calaveras Reservoir, was completed in June 2019.

As a part of the regulatory requirements for the operation of Calaveras Reservoir, the SFPUC agreed to implement bypass and instream flow schedules for Alameda and Calaveras creeks, to be protective of Central California Coast steelhead below the Alameda Creek Diversion Dam (ACDD) and Calaveras Dam.

Proposed Project

The proposed project would recapture water that the SFPUC is required to release or bypass upstream in Alameda Creek as part of the operation of the SFPUC’s new Calaveras Dam. Under the ACRP, the SFPUC would construct pumping and associated facilities to withdraw water from Pit F2, an existing quarry pit formerly used by quarry operators located adjacent to Alameda Creek about six miles downstream of Calaveras Reservoir. No construction would occur within the Alameda Creek stream channel. The SFPUC would pump water from Pit F2 that passively percolates or seeps into Pit F2 from Alameda Creek streamflow, and convey the water pumped from Pit F2 to existing SFPUC facilities for treatment and distribution to its customers in the Bay Area for municipal use. The recapture operation would be conducted within the SFPUC’s existing pre-1914 appropriative water rights.

The ACRP would require construction of several improvements in and around Pit F2. The proposed project components would include:

- Four turbine pumps mounted on barges that would float on the water surface of Pit F2 and be attached to the shore using a mooring system;
Four flexible discharge pipelines extending from each turbine pump to a new pipe manifold located onshore;

- A new pipeline connection between the pipe manifold and the existing Sunol Pump Station Pipeline;
- Throttling valves and a flow meter;
- An electrical control building; and
- An electrical transformer and overhead power lines.

**Recirculation of portions of the Draft EIR**

In June 2017, the San Francisco Planning Commission certified an environmental impact report (EIR) for the ACRP in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code. The EIR was appealed, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) filed a letter in support of the appeal that contained comments that the planning department considered to be “significant new information” under CEQA. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors upheld the appeal and directed the planning department to provide additional information and analysis regarding operational impacts of the ACRP on steelhead fish in Alameda Creek. The San Francisco Planning Department subsequently prepared revised portions of the EIR. In addition, the SFPUC revised the operating protocols for the ACRP in response to concerns raised by resource agencies.

Under the SFPUC’s revised project operations, pumping would conform with operating protocols to avoid effects on Alameda Creek streamflow during the steelhead migration period. The SFPUC would maintain water levels in Pit F2 within a certain range to avoid effects on the adjacent shallow aquifer, thereby avoiding effects on Alameda Creek streamflow. Nearly all pumping for the recapture operations would occur between July 1 and November 30 of each year, outside of the migration period for steelhead in Alameda Creek. Limited pumping could occur between May 1 and June 30, but only if conditions in Alameda Creek and water levels in Pit F2 are such that migration opportunities for steelhead would be unaffected.

Under the revised operations, the SFPUC estimates that compared to the operations presented in the June 2017 EIR, the average annual recapture volume would be reduced from 7,178 acre-feet per year to 6,045 acre-feet per year. The range of recapture volume would be reduced from a range of 4,878 to 9,161 acre-feet per year to a range of 4,045 to 8,031 acre-feet per year.

**Anticipated Schedule**

- Publication of recirculated portions of the Draft EIR: December 4, 2019
- Public Hearing on recirculated portions of the Draft EIR: January 9, 2020
- Public Comment Period on recirculated portions of the Draft EIR: December 4, 2019 - January 21, 2020
- Certification of the of Final EIR: June 2020
- Construction: 2020-2022 (20 months)

**Written comments on the Draft EIR** should be sent to Chris Kern, San Francisco Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94103 or emailed to chris.kern@sfgov.org.

**Questions about the Draft EIR or the CEQA process** should be directed to Chris Kern at (415) 575-9037.

**Questions about the Project or the WSIP in general:** Betsy L. Rhodes, biauppe@sfwater.org, 888-801-2661.