

PUC extends water project public review deadline

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The deadline for public comments on the Coastal Water Project's draft environmental impact report was extended to April 15.

Eric Zigas, project manager for the Public Utilities Commission, said the Energy Division issued the 14 day-extension after several parties requested more time to review the report and prepare their comments. Among them was ocean conservation group Surfrider Foundation.

"It's a complicated environmental impact report," said Joe Geever, state policy coordinator for Surfrider. The report, which contains about 1,000 pages, is divided into three volumes.

Sabrina Venskus, a Surfrider Foundation attorney, said even with two more weeks, it may not be enough time to thoroughly review the report.

Zigas said the comment period on a draft environmental impact report typically is 30 to 45 days. Because of the complexity of the Coastal Water Project report, 60 days were originally allotted for comments, he said.

The report, which examines California American Water's proposal to build a \$250 million seawater desalination plant in Moss Landing, was released Jan. 30.

Alternative projects evaluated in the report are a Cal Am-owned desalination plant called the North Marina Project, and the Regional Project, which would combine a publicly owned desalination plant in Marina, wastewater recycling, winter water diversions from the Salinas River and other water sources.

All three include water storage and recovery from the Seaside aquifer and are intended to replace Cal Am's pumping from the Carmel River.

The environmental impact report identifies the North Marina Project as "environmentally superior" because its water delivery line would be about five miles shorter than the pipeline for a Moss Landing plant.

Zigas said a handful of comments about the proposed projects has been received.

The comments will be addressed in a final environmental impact report. Then the Public Utilities Commission will recommend one of the projects or a combination of features from them. The final report could be finished by late summer.

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Comments on the draft environmental impact report on the Coastal Water Project can be sent to: Andrew Barnsdale, C/O Coastal Water Project, Environmental Science Associates, 225 Bush Street, Suite 1700, San Francisco CA 94104. By fax to (415) 896-0332 or online at www.CWP-EIR.com