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Date: August 14, 2017
To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Organizations and Interested Parties
Subject: Notice of Availability of an Environmental Impact Report for the Tulare Lake Storage and Floodwater Project

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN by the Semitropic Improvement District of the Semitropic Water Storage District (Semitropic), as the lead agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), that the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Tulare Lake Storage and Floodwater Project is available for public review and comment.

Project Title: Tulare Lake Storage and Floodwater Protection Project (Project)
State Clearing House Number: 2016121060

Project Location: The Project site is located east of Interstate 5 and State Highway 41, near Kettleman City, in Kings County, California, north of the Kings-Kern County line, and generally within the area of the Tulare Lake bed on reclaimed lands currently used for dry grazing and cultivated agriculture (primarily almond orchards and alfalfa). The Tulare Lake bed is the low elevation point in the Tulare Lake Basin and the receiving area for the drainages from the Kings, Kaweah, Tule, and Kern Rivers. The Project site is located to the north of Semitropic's existing service area and upstream from Semitropic's three existing turnouts in Reach 10A of the California Aqueduct.

Project Description: The purpose of the proposed DEIR is to analyze potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the proposed Tulare Lake Storage and Floodwater Protection Project (Project).

The Project would provide local, regional, and statewide public benefits to meet California's water storage and supply challenges by improving the management of floodwaters from the South Fork of the Kings River. The Project would also allow for possible management or regulation of other waters, including flood flows from streams tributary to the Tulare Lake region (which principally include the Kaweah and Tule Rivers) and regional and statewide water supplies, including high flows from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta). The Project would manage available waters by developing new surface water storage and conveyance facilities and utilizing existing facilities and groundwater conjunctive use capacity south of the Delta to provide for storage of floodwaters and surplus surface waters for beneficial uses. Water storage would be created by the construction of a leveed impoundment on approximately 19,700 gross acres within the dry Tulare Lake bed. Of the approximately 19,700 gross acres, approximately 12,000 net acres would be developed into a single surface storage reservoir with multiple interior storage cells with levees six to eight feet in height, resulting in a total storage capacity of approximately 15,000 to 30,000 acre-feet, respectively.

Available waters, including floodwaters having the potential to damage nearby prime agricultural lands and local communities, would be re-routed and diverted and conveyed to and through the proposed Project storage reservoir (Kettleman Reservoir), constructed in the dry Tulare Lake bed, through a combination of new and existing channels and canals; however, some improvements to existing conveyance facilities may be necessary. Depending on the location, canal-side pumping plants may be required to pump water from the conveyance canals into the reservoir. The proposed Project would include a new conveyance facility (the Kettleman Canal) and pumping plant (Kettleman Pumping Plant #1) to convey water from the existing South Fork Canal to the Kettleman Reservoir and/or the California Aqueduct (Aqueduct). The proposed Project would also include a second new conveyance facility, referred to as the Aqueduct Intertie, to convey water in both directions between the storage reservoir and the Aqueduct. The Aqueduct Intertie would have a capacity of up to approximately 2,100 cubic feet per second and would consist of a pumping plant (Kettleman Pumping Plant #2), up to three 144-inch inside-diameter pipelines between the pumping plant and the Aqueduct, and turn-in/turn-out structures on the east side of the Aqueduct.

Water stored in and conveyed through the Project reservoir would ultimately be transported, as capacity is available, into the California Aqueduct, principally for delivery to the Semitropic service area to meet water needs of existing irrigated lands. Water diverted from the Aqueduct would be delivered to meet direct demands or stored underground by use of existing groundwater storage facilities and, to a lesser extent, surface storage facilities accessible from the Aqueduct, including in-lieu and direct recharge facilities of the Semitropic Groundwater Bank in Kern County. Stored (banked) water would be recovered through extraction and/or by way of exchange, and delivered to primarily meet the demands of existing irrigated lands in Kings and Kern Counties. The Kings River floodwaters proposed to be diverted by the Project have generally historically escaped from, and have not been stored or beneficially used within, the Kings River service area.

Environmental Topics Evaluated: The Draft EIR examines the potential impacts generated by the proposed projects in relation to the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Oil and Mineral Resources
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Energy

In addition, the Draft EIR evaluates four project alternatives that include: a No Project Alternative, Alternative 1 - 1,200 cfs Project, Alternative 2 – No Storage Project, and the proposed 2,100 cfs Project Alternative.

The potential for the Project to generate significant unavoidable impacts, growth-inducing impacts, and significant irreversible environmental changes was also analyzed. The DEIR concluded that the Project would have potentially significant impacts on the environment pertaining to aesthetics (from construction activity and Project design); agriculture (from conversion of important farmland); biological resources (associated with impacts to special status plants and wildlife and associated habitat); cultural and paleontological resources (from land disturbing activities); geologic hazards (due to seismic activity, expansive soils and soil salinity); hazardous materials (associated with construction activity); hydrology and water quality (related to construction activity); noise (from construction activity); transportation (from construction activity); and utilities (due to construction activity). However, the DEIR presents mitigation measures that would mitigate all of these impacts to a level of less than significant.

Public Comment Period: Written comments on the DEIR will be received for a 60-day period, commencing on **August 14, 2017** and ending at **5:00 p.m. on October 13, 2017**, after which a Final EIR (FEIR) would be prepared containing comments and responses to comments that, together with the DEIR, will form the FEIR. The FEIR will be used by the Semitropic Board of Directors in its consideration of approval of the Tulare Lake Storage and Floodwater Protection Project (Project). Mailed comments must be post-marked by **October 13, 2017**.

Purpose of Review: The purpose of this review is to allow responsible and trustee agencies, organizations and interested members of the public the opportunity to make comments, share expertise, disclose agency analysis, check for accuracy, detect omissions, discover public concerns and solicit counter proposals pursuant to CEQA Guideline Sections 15087 (Public Review of Draft EIR) and 15105 (Public Review Period for a Draft EIR or a Proposed Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration).

Reviewing Locations: Copies of the Draft EIR are available for review at the following location(s):

Semitropic Water Storage District
1101 Central Avenue
PO Box 8043
Wasco, CA 93280

Kettleman City Branch of the Kings County Library
104 Becky Please Street
Kettleman City, CA 93239

The Draft EIR can also be accessed on the Semitropic website at **www.semitropic.com**. CDs may be purchased for $3.00 upon request at the Semitropic's office. Documents referenced in the DEIR will be available upon request to Semitropic.

Where to Send Comments: Submit all written comments to:

Isela Medina, PE
Semitropic Water Storage District
P.O. Box 8043,
1101 Central Avenue,
Wasco, CA 93280
Email: imedina@semitropic.com
Phone: 661-758-5113

Please include a return address and contact name with your written comments. Comments can also be sent via email.

Public Hearings Scheduled: A public hearing date is scheduled to occur during the 60-day public review period to receive comments on the DEIR. The hearing will be held at the following time and place:

September 12, 2017 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
Semitropic Water Storage District Offices
1101 Central Avenue,
Wasco, CA 93280

The meeting facilities will be accessible to people with disabilities. If special translation, signing services or other special accommodations are needed, please contact Isela Medina by phone at 661-758-5113, or via email at imedina@semitropic.com, at least 72 hours before the hearing.

Following the close of the public review period for the Draft EIR, Semitropic will prepare a Final EIR, incorporating all comments received during the public comment period and appropriate responses to comments, for consideration by the Semitropic's Board of Directors. As required by CEQA, proposed written responses to public agency comments submitted will be available to commenting public agencies at least 10 days prior to certification.