



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
911 WILSHIRE BLVD  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90017-3401

April 15, 1998

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

Office of the Chief  
Regulatory Branch

California Department of Transportation  
Attn: Mr. John P. Rieger, Chief  
Environmental Stewardship Branch  
District 11  
P.O. Box 85406  
San Diego, California 92186-5406

Dear Mr. Rieger:

I am writing as a follow-up to your telephone conversation with Mr. Terry Dean of this office on April 9, 1998. You had called to clarify information regarding two of Caltrans' proposed projects in Imperial County, California, to which we recently wrote you pursuant to the NEPA/404 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

We have revised our review of the information provided by Caltrans for the State Route 78/111 Brawley Bypass (Corps Project Number 97-20005-TCD). You have clarified to Mr. Dean that the Far Northern Alternatives were determined by Caltrans to be impracticable since they would not connect to any existing or currently proposed highway systems. They are dependent upon another project which is not currently proposed or funded. Therefore, this letter supersedes our letter dated March 19, 1998.

Reference your letter of February 27, 1998, which enclosed and referenced a letter dated December 16, 1997, regarding Caltrans' proposed construction of a four-lane divided expressway from State Route (SR) 86, northwest of Brawley, to SR 111, southeast of Brawley, Imperial County, California. Although you stated that the agency comment period pursuant to the MOU expired on January 31, 1998, our records indicate that we did not receive your documents until March 3, 1998. Therefore, the comment period would not end until April 17, 1998. However, we have given high priority to your project as a professional courtesy.

The Corps has reviewed the following documents for the proposed project:

- a. *Alternative Analysis Report for State Route 78/111 Brawley Bypass*, dated May, 1997, including Purpose and Need for the Project, Description of Alternatives, and Evaluation of Alternatives;
- b. *California Transportation Commission Resolution #G-88-15, Adoption of the 1988 State Transportation Improvement Program*;
- c. *Brawley Bypass - Preliminary Biological Review*, Caltrans Memorandum dated January 27, 1997;

d. *Brawley Bypass Alternative Study* Socioeconomic Estimates, Caltrans Memorandum dated February 25, 1997.

In addition, we have received a document entitled *Wetland Delineation for the Proposed Crossing of the New River near Brawley, California*, dated July 7, 1997. The report was prepared by Tierra Environmental Services, and was received by this office on October 28, 1997. although other Regulatory priorities, including emergency flood control project evaluations, have delayed our review and confirmation of the delineation, we will attempt to verify the delineation in the near future.

Based on our review of the referenced documents and your clarification of important issues to Mr. Dean, we preliminarily concur, pursuant to the NEPA/404 Integration MOU, with this project's purpose and need, and the overall project purpose, as well as criteria for initial alternative selection and cooperating agencies. Furthermore, we preliminarily concur with the selection of alternatives to be evaluated in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call Mr. Dean at (619) 674-5386. Please refer to this letter and 97-20005-TCD in your reply.

Sincerely,

  
Richard J. Schubel  
Chief, Regulatory Branch