

Friant Water Authority

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE FRIANT-KERN CANAL MIDDLE REACH CAPACITY CORRECTION PROJECT

DATE: December 3, 2019

PROJECT TITLE: Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project

TO: Office of Planning and Research, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Organizations and Parties

CEQA LEAD AGENCY: Friant Water Authority
854 N. Harvard Ave.
Lindsay, CA 93247

CONTACT: Doug DeFlitch, Chief Operating Officer c/o Ms. Toni Marie, Executive Secretary

INTRODUCTION

The Friant Water Authority (Friant), as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), as the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) propose to construct the Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project (Project), located in Tulare and Kern counties. Consistent with CEQA and NEPA, and based on the preliminary review of the Project, Friant and Reclamation decided to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate and address the potential impacts of implementing the Project. Your input is requested regarding the scope of the EIR/EIS and the potential environmental impacts of the Project.

Friant will be responsible for the scope and content of the document for CEQA purposes and Reclamation will be responsible for the scope and content of the document for NEPA purposes. Under CEQA, upon deciding to prepare an EIR, Friant, as the CEQA lead agency, must issue a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform responsible and trustee agencies and the public of its decision. The purpose of this NOP is to provide information describing the Project and its associated potential environmental effects and to solicit guidance and comments regarding the desired scope and content of the information to be included in the EIR/EIS. Responsible and trustee agencies should limit their comments to environmental information pertinent to each agency's area of statutory responsibility in connection with the Project.

The Project location, description, and environmental resource areas that may be affected are described below.

PROJECT LOCATION/SETTING

The Project is located in Tulare and Kern counties along the existing Friant-Kern Canal (FKC) between the communities of Lindsay, CA and McFarland, CA. The Project is within and adjacent to the alignment of the FKC from milepost (MP) 88.2 (Fifth Avenue check) to MP 121.5 (Lake Woollomes check). Figure 1 shows the approximate location of the Project.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The FKC delivers surface water from the San Joaquin River stored at Lake Millerton in the north to Friant Contractors in the south across 152 miles of the San Joaquin Valley. The FKC's designed conveyance capacity has been compromised by various factors since it began operation in 1951. Land subsidence, vegetation, and other issues have all led to a reduction in capacity. Subsidence, which is the surface expression of compacted land surface, has negatively affected the FKC's ability to convey water because the canal was designed to use gravity conveyance.

The FKC is situated largely in unincorporated portions of both Tulare and Kern counties and is surrounded predominantly by agricultural operations, with small segments adjacent to the unincorporated community of Strathmore and City of Porterville. Currently, dominant crops adjacent to the FKC include grapes, nuts, and alfalfa.

The majority of the roadways passing through the project area are county-owned, undivided, narrow two-lane collector and local roads used primarily to distribute traffic between local streets and arterials, and for agricultural and residential land access. State highways that cross the FKC in the Project area include state route (SR) 65 and SR 190 in Tulare County, and SR 155 in Kern County.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The FKC Middle Reach, an approximately 33-mile section of the FKC beginning near Strathmore, CA, has lost over 50 percent of its original design capacity due in large part to regional land subsidence, which has subjected Friant Division long-term contractors to water delivery shortages. As such, Friant's primary goal for the Project is to restore the original design capacity of the Middle Reach of the FKC.

The objectives of the Project are as follows:

- restore capacity to original design levels that meet the water supply delivery requirements of the Central Valley Project contracts of long-term contractors;
- restore capacity to convey water for the short-term conveyance of flood flows or non-CVP project water as well as provide potential surface water supplies for other users through exchanges and transfers;
- facilitate accommodation of potential future reductions in conveyance capacity caused by continued subsidence following Project implementation;
- restore capacity to the maximum extent using the original gravity conveyance design that avoids reliance on additional mechanical facilities and increased energy demands; and
- limit the amount of additional land necessary to be acquired for inclusion as part of the right-of-way for the proposed Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Friant and Reclamation have considered several preliminary alternative design concepts to restore capacity in the FKC Middle Reach. Friant has selected the below-described Canal Enlargement and Realignment Alternative as the proposed Project for purposes of CEQA. Following is a brief description of the proposed Project.

Proposed Project

The proposed Project consists of components that would both enlarge and replace the existing canal within an approximate 33-mile reach of the FKC (see Figure 2). Enlargements to about 10 miles of the existing canal would occur at the northernmost and southernmost portions of the project area by raising and widening the banks. Enlarging the canal would be accomplished by removing the uppermost extent of the existing concrete lining and, at the level of the demolished lining, excavating a horizontal bench (approximately 14 feet wide on each embankment or a total of 28 feet wide) into the existing grade and constructing new (i.e., wider) upper embankments, which would receive new concrete linings. Existing delivery turnouts would be maintained, to accommodate continued use of existing water conveyance facilities.

The proposed Project also consists of an approximate 23-mile realigned canal that would be constructed east of the existing canal from MP 95.7 to MP 119. The realigned canal would accommodate a conveyance capacity of between 3,500 and 4,000 cfs. Once the realigned canal is constructed, most of the existing canal in that location would be abandoned in place. New turnouts, consisting of new cast-in-place concrete structures and delivery piping, would be

constructed as needed along the realigned canal. Small portions of the existing canal (approximately 100 to 200 feet) would be left in place to create a pool upstream of existing pump stations. This would allow water to be delivered from the realigned canal to a controlled water level in the pool, thereby minimizing or avoiding impacts to existing pumps and distribution systems. Approximately 530 acres of new right-of-way would be required to accommodate the proposed Project.

The proposed Project would also require removal and replacement of the existing check structures, wasteways, and siphons at Deer Creek and White River. Control buildings and associated electrical, mechanical, and controls equipment at the Deer Creek and White River facilities would also be replaced with new equipment, as required. Where the realigned canal crosses roads that currently cross the FKC via existing bridges, the road crossing over the realigned canal would be provided in the form of a new concrete box siphon. Once the realigned canal is built and put into service at each road crossing, the existing bridge would be removed and replaced with embankment material constructed to grade through the abandoned FKC. Borrow material would be obtained from excavated material from the FKC embankments and from borrow sites at predetermined locations. A concrete batch plant would be located along the project alignment for construction of the concrete lining in the enlarged and realigned canal. In addition to the road crossings, existing utility crossings would be removed, modified, or replaced to accommodate the needs of the utilities and the realigned canal system. The proposed Project would also require modification, relocation, abandonment, and/or removal of existing privately held facilities on lands adjacent to the canal and within the new alignment. Impacted privately held facilities may include, but are not limited to, wells, irrigation systems, farm roads, miscellaneous structures, power lines, etc.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND SCOPE OF THE EIR/EIS

The EIR/EIS will disclose and analyze the potentially significant direct and indirect impacts that could result from construction and operation of the proposed Project or any alternative(s), in addition to other analyses that are appropriate under CEQA and NEPA (e.g., growth-inducing impacts, significant unavoidable impacts and irreversible environmental changes, potential secondary effects of mitigation measures, etc.). Where significant impacts are identified, the EIR/EIS will describe potentially feasible mitigation measures that could minimize or avoid significant adverse impacts. The EIR/EIS will also evaluate the full range of environmental issues required to be considered under the CEQA statute and the CEQA Guidelines as well as under the NEPA Council on Environmental Quality Regulations. An Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA/IS) was prepared, and is available for review at the following locations: <https://friantwater.org/> and https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_project_details.php?Project_ID=41341. Based on the analysis that was conducted in the EA/IS, the following resources are expected to have potentially significant impacts and will be further evaluated in the EIR/EIS:

Agriculture Resources	Hydrology and Water Quality
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases	Land Use and Planning
Biological Resources	Noise
Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources	Public Services and Utilities and Energy
Geology and Soils	Transportation
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Wildfires

In addition, the EIR/EIS will evaluate cumulative impacts of the Project, including effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the vicinity (CEQA Guidelines § 15130). The EIR/EIS will also identify and examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed Project, including a No Project/No Action Alternative and a Canal Enlargement Alternative (widen and raise existing canal only, no new, realigned canal).

OTHER AGENCIES WHOSE APPROVALS MAY BE REQUIRED

In addition to Friant other agencies may have responsibility for carrying out approvals for the Project, including the following:

- Bureau of Reclamation

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Regional Water Quality Control Board
- California Department of Transportation
- California State Historic Preservation Officer
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
- Tulare County
- Kern County

SUBMITTING COMMENTS

Comments and suggestions as to the appropriate scope of analysis in and/or contents of the EIR/EIS are invited from all responsible and trustee agencies as well as all other interested parties. Written comments concerning the scope of the EIR/EIS can be sent either by e-mail to FKCProjectComments@stantec.com or by mail to Doug DeFlitch at the following address by **5:00 PM on December 18, 2019**.

Doug DeFlitch, Chief Operating Officer

c/o Ms. Toni Marie, Executive Secretary
 Friant Water Authority
 854 N. Harvard Ave.
 Lindsay, CA 93247

All comments should include the name, email address, phone number, and mailing address of the contact person submitting the comments. If any responsible or trustee agency does not submit a comment in response to this NOP by the end of the NOP review/comment period on **January 2, 2020**, Friant may presume that the responsible agency or trustee agency agrees with the approach to the EIR described herein and does not have any additional issues to be considered and addressed in the EIR/EIS.

WEBSITE

The EIR/EIS and other documents will be made available on the Friant's website: <https://friantwater.org/> and Reclamation's website: and https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_project_details.php?Project_ID=41341. The website also provides regular updates on the Project.

SCOPING MEETING

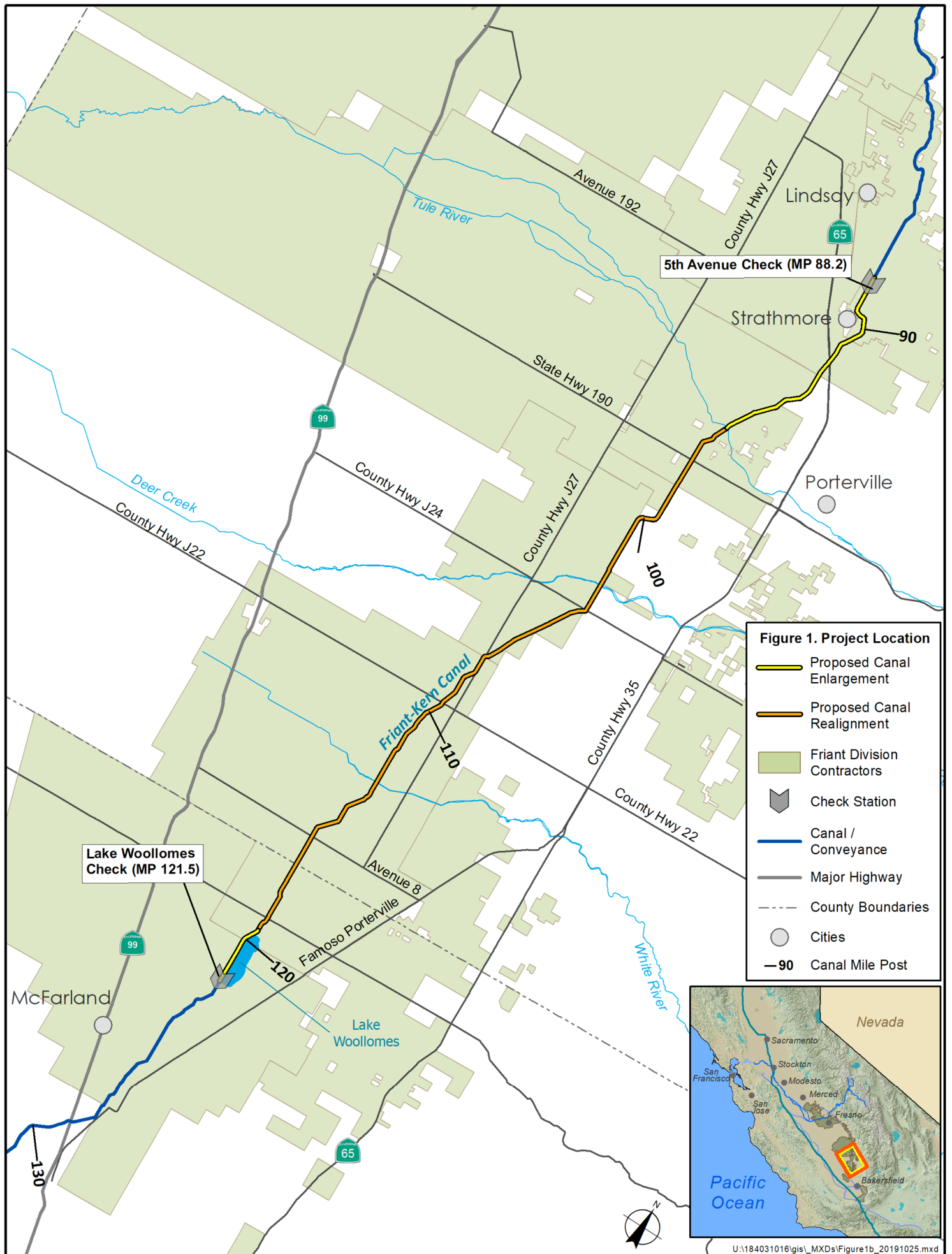
In addition to reviewing written comments received on this Notice of Preparation, a public scoping meeting will be held to facilitate/receive comments. The address, date, and time of this scoping meeting are as follows:

Date: **December 18, 2019**

Time: **5:30 – 7:30 pm**

Place: US Forest Service Sequoia National Forest Headquarters
 1839 S. Newcomb St.
 Porterville, CA 93257

For more background information about the Project please visit the Project website or contact Mr. Craig Moyle, Public Affairs Specialist, Stantec (916-418-8248/craig.moyle@stantec.com).



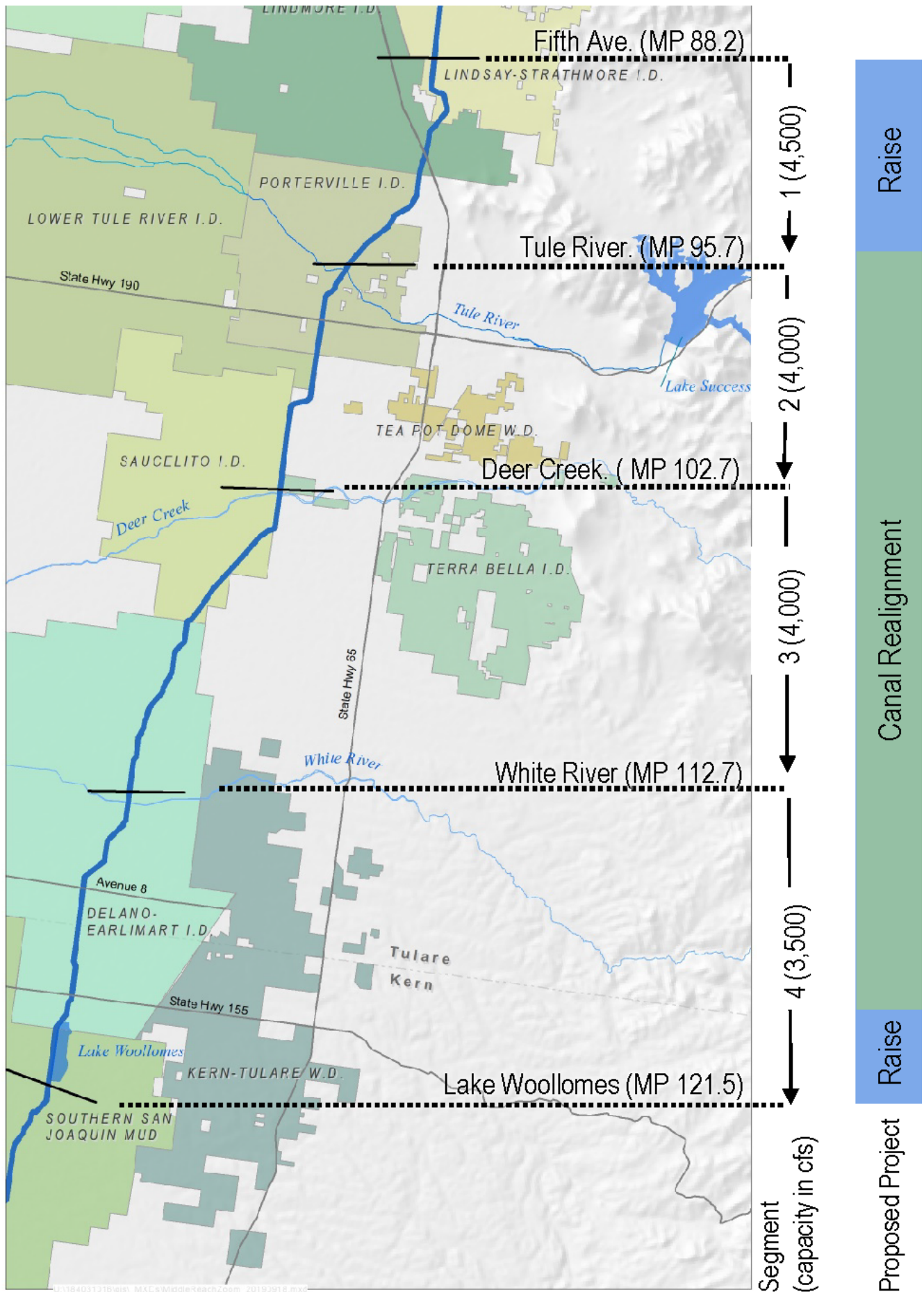


Figure 2. Project Elements