SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES - APPENDIX J

GUIDANCE FOR BSEP MAINTENANCE DISTRICT'S CHANNEL MAINTENANCE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Channel Maintenance Program

Purpose and Objectives

This Appendix describes the purpose, objectives and applicability of Staff's requirements for the BSEP Maintenance District's Channel Maintenance Program (Program). Staff is requiring as part of Condition of Certification **SOIL&WATER-8** that the Channel Maintenance Program provide long-term guidance to the applicant to implement routine channel maintenance projects and comply with BSEP's related biological (**BIO-18**) and flood protection (**SOIL&WATER -5 and -6**) Conditions of Certification in a feasible and environmentally-sensitive manner. The main goals of the Program would be to maintain the diversion channel to meet its original design to provide flood protection, maintain native plant communities, provide wildlife habitat and a wildlife movement corridor, and maintain groundwater recharge. In this appendix, staff provides a summary of related programmatic documentation required for implementation of the Channel Maintenance Program.

The Channel Maintenance Program would be used by the applicant and the CPM to ensure that routine channel maintenance practices would be conducted in an efficient, consistent, and environmentally-sensitive manner. Staff's objectives for the Channel Maintenance Program are as follows:

1. Develop standardized practices and protocols for routine sediment removal, vegetation management, channel maintenance, and structural repair.

2. Ensure routine channel maintenance activities reflect the Energy Commission's Conditions of Certification for BSEP.

3. Avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts and encourage preservation and restoration of the diversion channel and its revegetated areas.

Applicability and Use of the Channel Maintenance Program

The Channel Maintenance Program applies to routine channel maintenance activities, including three major types of activities: sediment removal, vegetation management, and bank protection and grade control maintenance/repairs. These activities would be undertaken to ensure flood conveyance capacity is maintained in the channel. Additional minor maintenance activities would also be included in routine channel maintenance.

The channel maintenance work area addressed by this Channel Maintenance Program would include the BSEP engineered channel, typically extending to the top of bank,

include access roads, and any adjacent property that BSEP or the District owns or holds an easement for access and maintenance. The Program would include Pine Tree Creek diversion channel maintenance as needed to protect the BSEP facilities. The District would not provide maintenance on private property, unless requested, or an easement was provided.

The Channel Maintenance Program would be a process and policy document prepared by BSEP, reviewed and approved by the CPM through consultation with CDFG and Kern County, and adopted by the District. Once adopted, the Channel Maintenance Program would be used by the applicant to guide the implementation of routine channel maintenance activities and projects. The Channel Maintenance Program would outline specific measures, protocols, policies, and inspection and reporting requirements to ensure that routine channel maintenance projects would be implemented in an efficient and environmentally-sensitive manner. This Channel Maintenance Program would be a living program that would change as improvements and modifications are made to reflect the best available knowledge, technology, and practices.

The Channel Maintenance Program is intended to establish an ongoing program for the life of the channel. Projections of future channel maintenance activities for the Channel Maintenance Program cannot represent the exact extent of work that would occur. Actual channel maintenance activities would vary from year to year. The Channel Maintenance Program would be reviewed annually by the CPM in the Annual Compliance Report as required in Condition of Certification **SOIL&WATER-8**. The overall program would be reviewed in ten years as part of the **BIO-18** revegetation milestone. Condition of Certification **BIO-18** specifies that within 10 years the applicant shall establish at least 15 percent of the 41.5-acre channel bottom, or 6.2 acres, with native desert shrub plant community, and that non-native weeds constitute less than 2 percent cover of the vegetated channel.

Channel Maintenance Activities

The following provides an overview and brief discussion of the major activities to be addressed by the Channel Maintenance Program. In addition, the Channel Maintenance Program applies to more minor, routine activities such as fence repair, trash removal, or other blockage clearing.

Sediment Removal

In most cases, sediment deposition is a natural process that occurs where the channel gradient flattens out or where the gradient is otherwise flat over long reaches. Some sediment is desirable in the engineered channel to support biological functions such as vegetation colonization. Unfortunately, sediment can build up to a point where it begins to compromise the design. Sediment removal is the act of mechanically removing sediment that has been deposited in the channel. Typically, sediment is removed when it: (1) reduces flood capacity, (2) prevents appurtenant hydraulic structures from functioning as intended, and (3) becomes a permanent, non-erodible barrier to instream flows. Staff recommends that sediment removal projects be implemented in the dry season. The applicant would be required to implement BMPs to ensure that sediment

removal projects have the least impact possible to native plant communities and wildlife habitat.
The method of sediment removal is dependent on the channel type (earth bottom, soil concrete bed, or stilling basin), equipment, soil characteristics, and maintenance access location. The average annual quantity of sediment to be removed would vary from year to year depending on rainfall conditions and sediment delivery from the watershed. During some or most years, no sediment would need to be removed. Aeolian processes may also cause a significant volume of sediment to accumulate from wind blown sand collecting in the low lying channel. Staff anticipates that the location of sediment removal within the channel would vary each year. The applicant and the District would develop Maintenance Guidelines (discussed below) to determine when and where sediment removal is required.

Vegetation Management

The applicant would manage vegetation in and adjacent to the diversion channel to maintain the biological functions and values described in **BIO-18**. Vegetation is not expected to adversely affect the ability of the channel to contain the design discharge owing to the relatively sparse nature of arid zone vegetation typically found in ephemeral channels. The applicant's vegetation management would include control of invasive or nonnative vegetation as described in **BIO-18**. Vegetation management can be accomplished through hand clearing or herbicide applications. A method or combination of methods could be chosen for each area depending on the maintenance needs. Staff recommends that the applicant only use herbicides according to the label directions and for uses approved by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR).

The applicant would also plant and maintain revegetation for the BSEP instream mitigation. In the first few years after initial planting, the applicant would provide weed control at mitigation areas to increase the number of native shrubs and establish a self-sustaining plant community which provides wildlife habitat as required in Condition of Certification **BIO-18**. The applicant would manage vegetation for other purposes including the protection of soil cement linings from plant roots, levees (if applicable), and maintaining access roads.

The frequency of vegetation management activities and inspections shall be as described in **BIO-18**.

Bank Protection and Grade Control Repairs

Channel erosion is a natural process, which mostly happens during major storm events. Erosion can occur because of hydraulic forces and geotechnical instabilities. Bank protection and grade control structure repairs involve any action by the applicant to repair eroded banks, incised toes, scoured channel beds, as well as preventative erosion protection. The applicant would implement instream repairs when the problem (1) causes or could cause significant damage to BSEP, adjacent property, or the structural elements of the diversion channel, (2) is a public safety concern, (3) negatively affects groundwater recharge, or (4) negatively affects the native plant

communities and wildlife habitat within the channel, or poses an entrapment hazard to desert tortoise and other wildlife.

Erosion of banks can result in increased sediment deposition, which can lead to decreased flood flow capacities and potential flood hazards. A major failure to the soil cement bank cover or grade control structure would cause severe erosion, may cause property damage, and would create a safety hazard and threat to wildlife. Repair of soil cement bank protection and grade control structures shall occur when these structures show substantial erosion and/or fail and would be replaced with in-kind, in-place materials within the same footprint. Obstructions at grade control structures would be removed to maintain functions of such structures and access for desert tortoise and other wildlife.

Banks and grade control structures would be inspected after all major storms for damage and maintenance needs. The applicant would make an inspection of the channel upstream and downstream of an erosion site to determine if there is an identifiable cause of the erosion. Design of a particular facilities repair may require evaluation of other site-specific characteristics such as bank slope, shear stress, soil type, flow velocity and depth, Froude number, or the active channel's geomorphic characteristics.

Routine Channel Maintenance

Routine channel maintenance activities included in this Channel Maintenance Program would be: trash removal and associated debris to maintain channel design capacity; repair and installation of fences, gates and signs; grading and other repairs to restore the original contour of access roads and levees (if applicable); and removal of flow obstructions at BSEP storm drain (flap gate) outfalls.

Routine maintenance occurs on a year-round basis. Typically, routine maintenance that requires the operation of heavy equipment in the channel would be limited to the dry conditions.

Channel Maintenance Program - Exclusions

Routine channel maintenance would not include emergency repair. A situation is considered an "emergency" if it is a sudden, unexpected occurrence involving a clear and imminent danger that demands immediate action to prevent or mitigate loss of or damage to life, health, property, or essential public services (Public Resource Code Section 21060.3).

Large construction projects or Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) would not be considered routine channel maintenance and would not be addressed through the Channel Maintenance Program. Staff recommends that the applicant coordinate with Kern County and the CPM to develop a long-term plan that deals with CIP for the diversion channel.

Related Programmatic Documentation

Because this Channel Maintenance Program would be designed to guide the implementation of routine channel maintenance projects and activities over the long-term, it shall address channel maintenance at a general or "programmatic" level. As such, staff's Condition of Certification **SOIL&WATER-8** provides guidelines and implementation measures that characterize how channel maintenance would be conducted by the District.

The applicant would be required to comply with the Requirements of Waste Discharge provided in **Soil and Water Appendices E, F, G & H** as discussed in Condition of Certification **Soil&Water-4.** The applicant would also be required to meet CDFG requirements for channel maintenance activities and provide CDFG with a copy of the Channel Maintenance Program for review and comment. Because the diversion channel would be mapped as a SFHA, the applicant would be required to comply with NFIP regulations. The CPM would review all agency permits for routine channel maintenance activities and approve the Channel Maintenance Program.

Channel Maintenance Process Overview

This section describes Staff's recommendation for three distinct phases of the Channel Maintenance Program: program development and documentation, implementation of annual routine channel maintenance activities, and annual compliance reporting.

Program Development and Documentation

This Channel Maintenance Program would be developed to guide the long-term implementation of the District's annual routine channel maintenance work. The Channel Maintenance Program would enable the applicant to participate in a watershed-wide approach to environmental protection. Through these programmatic documents, the applicant would be committed to implementing individual maintenance projects in an environmentally-sensitive manner.

Maintenance Guidelines

Staff's Maintenance Guidelines are based on two concepts: (1) the maintenance standard and (2) the acceptable maintenance condition. The maintenance standard is defined as the design facility condition, where the engineered channel has full design capacity and freeboard. The acceptable maintenance condition is the condition to which a channel can be allowed to deteriorate before capacity is determined to be compromised and maintenance work becomes essential. The focus of BSEP's hydraulic and sediment transport analyses were related to the study of these two concepts. These analyses were prepared to investigate the *annual* accumulation of sediment and forecast the threshold of an acceptable maintenance condition. Further study is needed to understand annual sediment contribution, accumulation and capacity constraints.

The Maintenance Guidelines may also apply to other activities such as vegetation management, trash and debris collection, blockage removal, fence repairs, and access road maintenance. Vegetation in the desert channel environment does affect the

channel's roughness, but increases in channel roughness would be slight because of the sparse vegetation and it is not expected to have an impact on the channel's flood capacity. By conducting these routine maintenance activities, the applicant would ensure that facilities continue to provide the level of flood protection for which they were constructed. These efforts protect channel function and help to comply with NFIP regulations and Kern County's Floodplain Management Ordinance.

Implementation

Maintenance work would be proposed either as part of a Channel Maintenance Work Plan or as other work identified later in the year through inspection. Staff recommends specific Maintenance Guidelines be developed to ensure that the maintenance meets pre-established conditions of certification and engineering requirements. Staff recommends that field reconnaissance, inspection or survey be implemented to monitor the channel's maintenance condition and compare to specific Maintenance Guidelines. Maintenance Guidelines for BSEP's vegetation management activities are established in Condition of Certification **BIO-18**.

BSEP's Maintenance Guidelines for sediment removal would provide information on the allowable depth of sediment for the engineered channel that would continue to provide design discharge protection. Sediment should be allowed to store in the channel as minor aggradation which is part of the sediment transport and geomorphic function of the channel. Staff believe that sediment storage in the basin of the grade control structures provide an excellent source of sediment for long-term transport through the engineered channel. Staff recommends that the channel sediment be allowed to accumulate, on average, up to the sill elevation plus the depth of the active channel. Staff estimates that the depth of the active or bank full channel is roughly 1.5 to 2.5 feet, but further study is recommended. BSEP's engineer should verify that this sediment storage threshold, several feet above the sill elevation, would not affect the grade control structures ability to perform under the design discharge. Staff also recommends that BSEP verify that the channel would maintain capacity for the design discharge as part of compliance with Conditions of Certification **SOIL&WATER- 6(E), 7, ,** and **-15**.

Reporting

To assess the overall progress of the mitigation program and determine the accuracy of the impact projections, annual reports would be made to the CPM for review as part of the BSEP's Annual Compliance Report. The Channel Maintenance Program Annual Report would specify which maintenance activities were completed during the year including type of work, location, and measure of the activity (e.g. cubic yards of sediment removed). Staff requires that the applicant provide a report describing "Lessons Learned" to evaluate the effectiveness of both resource protection and maintenance methods used throughout the year. The information and assessments would be used to update BMPs, Channel Maintenance Program processes, and the Maintenance Guidelines and to create a greater understanding of how to accomplish environmentally-sensitive maintenance work. The report should also include a section

describing any planned “major” maintenance activities and the extent of work to be accomplished.

In addition to reporting on the maintenance activity completed for the year, the applicant would also provide reporting on the implementation of the mitigation program. For the first 10 years of the program, the applicant would provide photographs of the diversion channel and meet the verification requirements of Condition of Certification **BIO-18**.

Resource Protection Policies

Staff recommends the Channel Maintenance Program establish policies to ensure that resources would be protected to the furthest extent feasible during routine channel maintenance activities and are consistent with state and federal laws protecting special status species. The Channel Maintenance Program policies would be developed to guide decision-making for channel maintenance activities. The applicant would develop these policies through the routine channel maintenance planning process. BMPs would be developed to implement these policies. All routine channel maintenance activities would adhere to the policies contained in the program. Staff recommends that the applicant implement the following policies:

Policy 1*: The applicant will conduct all routine channel maintenance activities according to the process and protocols established in the Channel Maintenance Program.*

Policy 2*: Decisions regarding the necessity of routine sediment removal (to restore design discharge capacities) and vegetation management activities will be made by the applicant using the thresholds established in the Maintenance Guidelines. This information will be used to formulate in part an annual routine maintenance work plan.*

Policy 3*: The District will continue to develop, implement, and update BMPs for implementation of channel maintenance projects to ensure that maintenance activities are conducted in the most effective and environmentally-sensitive way possible and are technically feasible and economically reasonable.*

Policy 4*: The applicant will use the Channel Maintenance Program to manage its routine channel maintenance activities in a programmatic way.*

Policy 5*: The applicant will implement measures to avoid and minimize impacts to native species, especially special-status and riparian-dependent species. All management actions taken shall be consistent with state and federal laws protecting special status species (California Endangered Species Act of 1984, Fish and Game Code, sections 2050 through 2098; Federal Endangered Species Act (Title 16, United States Code, section 1531 et seq., and Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, part 17.1 et seq.)*

Policy 6*: Control and removal of native vegetation will be minimized to the extent practicable. Where appropriate, measures will be taken to leave the work site in a vegetated condition after routine channel maintenance activities are completed.*

Policy 7*: The applicant's use of herbicides will be consistent with environmental goals, including protection, preservation, and restoration. Herbicides will be used such that negative effects to the environment are avoided or minimized.*

Policy 8*: The applicant will implement measures to ensure that hazardous materials are properly handled and the quality of water resources is protected by all reasonable means when removing sediments from the channel.*

Policy 9*: The temporary stockpiling, transportation, and disposal of removed sediments from channel maintenance projects shall be implemented, avoiding or minimizing impacts to the surrounding natural environment.*

Policy 10*: Channel maintenance projects shall be implemented, avoiding or minimizing the potential for short-term noise nuisances and short-term air quality impacts to the surrounding community.*

Policy 11*: Measures shall be implemented at the work site to ensure that the potential for significant impacts to previously undiscovered cultural resources are reduced to less-than-significant levels.*