

Staff Report

for the Water & Hydroelectric Operations Committee Meeting of August 19, 2020

TO: Water & Hydroelectric Operations Committee

FROM: Chip Close, Water Operations Manager

DATE: August 11, 2020

SUBJECT: Irrigation Water Request on South Fork Wolf Creek

OPERATIONS

RECOMMENDATION:

Deny request for water sale from Sunshine Valley Canal to South County Parcel via South Fork of Wolf Creek.

BACKGROUND:

During the 2013 – 2016 drought, the District received numerous hardship requests for additional irrigation water. One of those requests came from a District customer who had a desire to purchase additional waters to irrigate a portion of their property boarding SFWC that had gone dry. The customer is a purchaser of water from the Grove Canal, yet requested additional waters be delivered from the District's Sunshine Valley Canal with delivery into the South Fork of Wolf Creek (SFWC) as a means of conveyance. The customer inferred this delivery would get water to an otherwise inaccessible portion of their property, and would help provide water to the dry SFWC.

The District established a one-time special contract as part of a drought hardship and began delivery in September of 2016. The contract terminated at the end of the 2016 irrigation season, and a return to normal hydrology has eliminated any additional requests until recently.

Two weeks ago, Staff received a request from the customer that the special contract be reinstated. The customer stated that water was necessary as the SFWC was going dry, and they had additional water needs for their property. Staff has investigated the request and cannot make the recommendation for service due to a lack of efficient delivery, potential water rights violation, and lack of a current drought emergency.

Staff's initial concern is the water delivery location from the Sunshine Valley Canal is 10 miles from the parcel requesting additional water. Conveyance of Ag water in a natural waterway for this distance is not an efficient use of the District's resource. It is likely a majority of the water purchased will not make it to the property due to diversion

and evaporation. Additionally, the requesting party has made it clear that this water is to re-establish flows in the intermittent stream of SFWC. Selling irrigation water for providing artificial flows to an intermittent creek is not an allowed purpose of use for District water rights and could jeopardize licensure at the State Water Resources Control Board. Lastly, the previous special agreement occurred during drought conditions when hardship cases were given more scrutiny. However, the District nor the State is in a drought emergency; therefore, no special accommodations should be made.

As an alternative, Staff has studied more efficient delivery options from the Grove Canal where conveyance is 2.3 miles to the parcel. This was communicated to the customer, but their preference was to utilize the entire length of the SFWC for conveyance, further evidence that the water is being requested solely for providing flow to the SFWC.

Since the time this request came in, Staff has received multiple requests for water deliveries to Rush Creek and Cherry Creek. Further proving that establishing water sales for the main purpose of keeping an intermittent stream flowing will lead to endless requests for flows in normally dry creeks.

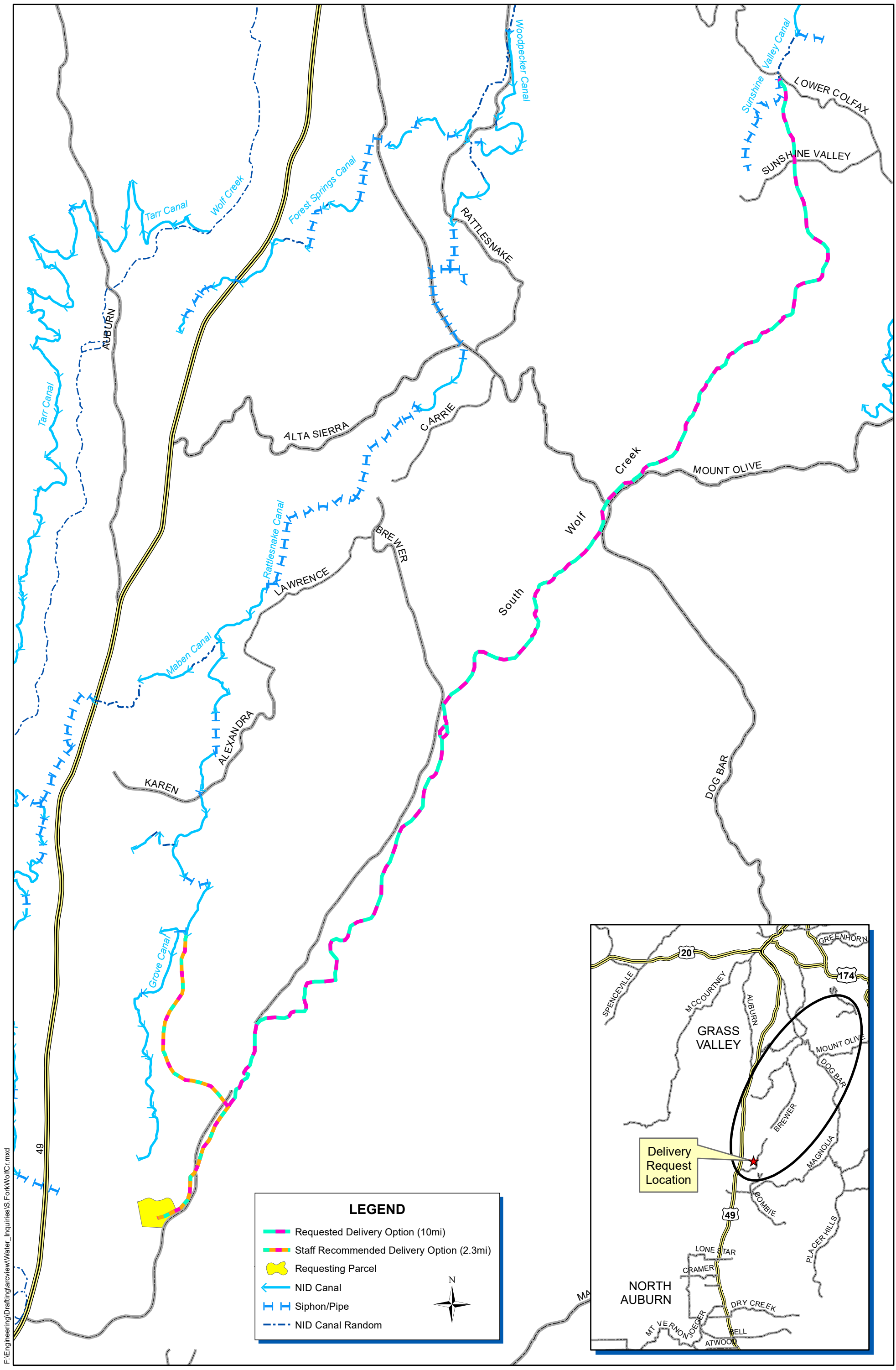
BUDGETARY IMPACT:

No budget impact at this time.

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Attachment (1):

- Map of Delivery Locations



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NEVADA IRRIGATION DISTRICT
 NEVADA COUNTY – PLACER COUNTY
 GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

IRRIGATION WATER REQUEST ON SOUTH FORK WOLF CREEK
 Drawn By: D. HUNT Date: 8/11/2020 Scale: 1"=3000'@11x17 Sheet: 1 of 1