

*Alaskan Water for California?: The Subsea
Pipeline Option*

January 1992

OTA-BP-O-92

NTIS order #PB92-157627

B A C K G R O U N D P A P E R

Alaskan Water for California?

THE SUBSEA PIPELINE OPTION



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

Recommended Citation:

U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Alaskan Water for California? The Subsea Pipeline Option Background Paper, OTA-BP-O-92* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1992).

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328
ISBN 0-16 -036021-8

Foreword

Even more than gold and silver, fresh water has shaped—and will continue to shape—the development of the Western United States. In the arid and semiarid regions of the Southwest, in particular, ensuring that there will be enough water to satisfy the future demands of consumers is a full-time job. Five years of drought in the West have elevated the issue of water supply on the list of regional concerns. Questions about who gets the available water, where it will come from, how it is used, how much is paid for it and by whom, and where future demand will go are of paramount importance to farmers, planners, environmentalists, professional water managers, and, increasingly, average citizens.

Various options for increasing supply and for reducing demand for water are being considered with renewed intensity by California water planners. This OTA background paper focuses on one technological option for increasing the supply of fresh water to the Southwest—that of building a freshwater subsea pipeline to transport water from Alaska to California. Originally a suggestion by Governor Walter Hickel of Alaska, the proposal has recently attracted attention in southern California.

To help determine whether construction of a subsea pipeline merits additional attention, Congressmen George E. Brown, Jr. and Edward Roybal of California and Don Young of Alaska asked the Office of Technology Assessment to conduct a brief evaluation of the idea. This paper examines important issues related to this subject, including engineering feasibility and cost, Alaskan water availability, California's projected water demand, and other alternatives for meeting future water needs. This study is not a detailed engineering feasibility analysis; indeed, no such study has yet been undertaken. It suggests that California needs to better understand the many demand, supply, and pricing options available to meet future water demand, including the relative costs, benefits, and ultimate potential of each.



JOHN H. GIBBONS
Director

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations who shared their special knowledge, expertise, and information with us in the preparation of this background paper. We are especially indebted to those who participated in our subsea pipeline workshop in Los Angeles, California.

Participants, OTA Subsea Pipeline Workshop August 14, 1991

Don Kash, *Chairman*
Hazel Chair of Public Policy
Institute of Public Policy
George Mason University

Craig Bell
Executive Director
Western States Water Council

Michael B. Bessler
Chief, General Engineering Branch
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Department of the Interior

Jeanne-Marie Bruno
Head, Wastewater Reclamation Branch
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Neal Cline
General Manager
Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority

Cliff Davidson
Chairman, House Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature

Robert Gottlieb
Lecturer
Urban Planning Program
University of California at Los Angeles

Robert Hattoy
Southern California-Nevada Regional Director
Sierra Club

Walter J. Hickel
Governor, State of Alaska

Carlos Madrid
District Chief
Department of Water Resources
Southern District

Dean E. Mann
Former Head, Social Science Division
National Water Commission

James Noyes
Deputy Director
Los Angeles County Department of Public Works

Christine E. Reed
Director, Metropolitan Water District (representing
Santa Monica)

William C. Samples
Project Manager
Los Angeles District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Nathan W. Snyder
Technical Director
Ralph M. Parsons Co.

Glenn S. Tarbox
Vice President
Manager, Water Resources
Bechtel Corp.

Additional Contributors

Don L. Adams
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Marilyn Arnold
Environment and Energy Study Institute

Deborah Braver
California Department of Water Resources

Thomas J. Cassidy
American Rivers

Warren J. Cole
California Department of Water Resources

Ed Godlewski
Fluor Daniel

Tom Graff
Environmental Defense Fund

Gary Gustafson
Division of State Lands, Oregon

Helen M. Ingram
University of Arizona

Bill McQueen
BC Hydro

Brian Smith
California Department of Water Resources

NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the workshop participants and other contributors. The workshop participants and other contributors do not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this background paper. OTA assumes full responsibility for the background paper and the accuracy of its contents.