

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Finding of No Significant Impact

Transfer of up to 20,500 acre-feet of Central Valley Project Water from Central California Irrigation District to San Luis, Panoche, Del Puerto and Westlands Water Districts and up to 5,000 acre-feet of Central Valley Project Water from Firebaugh Canal Water District to San Luis Water District or Westlands Water District

FONSI-12-006

Recommended by:



Nick Kilb
Natural Resources Specialist
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 7/27/12

Concurred by:



Chuck Siek
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 7/27/12

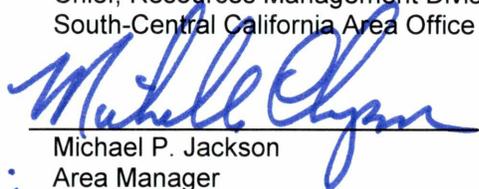
Concurred by:



Randy English
Chief, Resources Management Division
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 7/27/12

Approved by:



Michael P. Jackson
Area Manager
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 7/27/12

FOR:



Introduction

In accordance with the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for the approval of a transfer of up to 20,500 acre-feet (af) of Central Valley Project (CVP) water from Central California Irrigation District (CCID) to Panoche Water District (PWD), Del Puerto Water District (DPWD), San Luis Water District (SLWD) and/or Westlands Water District (WWD) (Transfer Recipient Districts) and a transfer of up to 5,000 af of CVP water from Firebaugh Canal Water District (FCWD) to SLWD or WWD.

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) EA-12-006, *Transfer of up to 20,500 acre-feet of Central Valley Project Water from Central California Irrigation District to San Luis, Panoche, Del Puerto and Westlands Water Districts and up to 5,000 acre-feet of Central Valley Project Water from Firebaugh Canal Water District to San Luis Water District or Westlands Water District*, which is incorporated by reference.

Reclamation provided the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft EA/FONSI between June 27 and July 10, 2012. Reclamation received one comment letter, one memorandum, and several requests for information during the public review period. Reclamation's response to comments can be found in Section 5 of EA 12-006, and the comment letter, memo, and requests for information can be found in Appendix B of the document. Changes from the draft FONSI that are not minor editorial changes are indicated by vertical lines in the left margin of this document.

Background

California has experienced periodic droughts in recent years that have reduced water supplies to many CVP contractors. The South-of-Delta (SOD) CVP agricultural allocation forecast for 2012 began at 30% and then was increased to 40% (Reclamation, 2012a). As a result, SOD water contractors have a need to find alternative sources of water to not only fulfill 2012 demands, but to prepare for demands going into 2013. The proposed transfers would allow water districts and landowners greater flexibility to manage limited water supplies during summer months in these years.

Proposed Action

Central California Irrigation District Transfers

Reclamation proposes to approve a series of annual transfers of up to 20,500 af of CCID's San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors' (Exchange Contractors) CVP Contract (Exchange Contract) supplies to the Transfer Recipient Districts.

Firebaugh Canal Water District Transfers

Reclamation proposes to approve a series of annual transfers of up to 5,000 af of FCWD's Exchange Contract CVP supplies to WWD and/or SLWD.

Following execution of the Finding of No Significant Impact and approval by the Contracting Officer, both transfers would occur from July 2012 through December 31, 2012 and April 1, 2013 through December 31, 2013. Specific details of the transfers are available in EA 12-006.

Environmental Commitments/Requirements

Reclamation's CVP Transfer Restrictions

Reclamation would place the following restrictions on the CVP water associated with this action:

- No native or untilled land (fallow for three consecutive years or more) may be cultivated with CVP water involved in these actions.
- No new construction or modification of existing facilities may occur in order to complete the Proposed Action.
- Transfers and exchanges involving CVP water cannot alter the flow regime of natural waterways or natural watercourses such as rivers, streams, creeks, ponds, pools, wetlands, etc., so as to have a detrimental effect on fish or wildlife or their habitats.
- All transfers and exchanges involving CVP water must comply with all applicable Federal, State and local laws, regulations, permits, guidelines and policies.
- The Proposed Action would not increase or decrease water supplies that would result in development.
- Under the Proposed Action, CCID would not increase the receiving water's salinity above 700 mg/L TDS, and would apply these commitments for any wells that would pump groundwater into CCID's Main Canal upstream of Mile Post 53.856:
- The wells would not be authorized to pump for transfer during the fall months (September 15 through December), when there is reduced flow and water quality for some wildlife refuges is most critical.
- A non-detect requirement for selenium in groundwater tested at least annually at the wellhead, by a method with a detection limit of no more than 1 microgram/liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$).

In addition to these requirements, the parties would comply with the following Groundwater Management Plans and/or Policies as applicable:

Exchange Contractors' Groundwater Management Plan

Both CCID and FWCD are party to the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority's AB 3030 Groundwater Management Plan. The entire plan and its requirements are incorporated herein by reference. Transfers conducted under this action would be required to follow the plan's requirements for surface water transfers.

Central California Irrigation District

In addition to Reclamation's policies and the Exchange Contractors' groundwater management plan, CCID and their landowners would follow the policies entitled "*Central California Irrigation District Water Transfer Policy*" and "*Central California Irrigation District Rules Governing Pumping of Private Wells for Credits in Other Districts.*" Copies of both policies are attached to the Exchange Contractors' groundwater management plan.

Firebaugh Canal Water District

In addition to Reclamation's policies and the Exchange Contractors' groundwater management plan, FCWD and their landowners would follow the policy entitled "*Firebaugh Canal Water District Water Transfer Policy.*" A copy of the policy is attached to the Exchange Contractors' groundwater management plan.

Findings

Water Resources

Since the Proposed Action would not involve construction or modification, nor interfere with CVP or SWP operations, there would be no direct, indirect or cumulative adverse impacts to existing facilities or other contractors.

As CCID and FCWD would follow the Exchange Contractors' AB3030 Groundwater Management Plan and restrict pumping to below the safe yield, there would be no direct, indirect or cumulative adverse impacts to groundwater or subsidence in the Exchange Contractors' service area. Since the transfers may reduce groundwater pumping in the Transfer Recipient Districts, the Proposed Action may reduce the risks of groundwater overdraft and subsidence in their respective areas. As a result, the Proposed Action would have no potential adverse impacts, but may have a cumulative beneficial effect on groundwater resources.

CCID and FCWD would avoid any adverse impacts to water quality involving water delivered to their users by following the commitments outlined in the districts' respective rules. CCID's commitments regarding the Main Canal upstream of Mile Post Station 53.856 would avoid potential direct, indirect or cumulative adverse impacts to refuge water quality. Since the transferred water

delivered via the DMC and SLC would be CVP supplies, there would be no direct, indirect or cumulative adverse impacts to water quality delivered to the Transfer Recipient Districts.

Land Use

There would be no land use changes in CCID as their water supply quantity would not change. Irrigated acreages and crop mixes would remain the same.

There would be a slight positive impact on land use in the Transfer Recipient Districts due to the ability of some established row crops to remain in production and the enhanced survival of orchards and vineyards.

For the proposed action involving FCWD, the additional water delivered to SLWD or WWD would offset a portion of their surface water supply deficit. The additional water supplies would allow continued production on lands that would have otherwise been fallowed, and sustain permanent crops that otherwise may have been abandoned.

There would be no land use changes in FCWD as their water supply quantity would not change. Irrigated acreages and crop mixes would remain the same.

There would be a slight positive impact on land use in SLWD and/or WWD due to the ability of some established row crops to remain in production and the enhanced survival of orchards and vineyards.

There would be no new construction or excavation occurring as part of the Proposed Action. No native or untilled land (fallow for 3 years or more) would be cultivated with the CVP water involved with these actions. The Proposed Action would not increase or decrease water supplies that would result in development. Due to these requirements and since the Proposed Action supports current land use, there would be no cumulative adverse impacts to land use.

Biological Resources

Most of the habitat types required by species protected by the ESA do not occur in the project area. The Proposed Action would not involve the conversion of any land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. The Proposed Action also would not change the land use patterns of the cultivated or fallowed fields that do have some value to listed species or to birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Since no natural stream courses or additional surface water pumping would occur, there would be no effects on listed fish species. No critical habitat occurs within the area affected by the Proposed Action and so none of the primary constituent elements of any critical habitat would be affected.

The 20,500 af of lower-quality groundwater pumped into the CCID's distribution system is required to not increase the TDS in CCID's canals to more than 700

mg/L, which would be low enough to protect the giant garter snake in suitable habitat in the Grasslands wetlands. Requirements by CCID for non-detect levels of selenium (detection limit of no higher than 1 µg/L) and no pumping during the fall upstream of Mile Post 53.856, and the fact that FCWD will not approve any water transfer involving a substitution of groundwater that FCWD determines would interfere with their ability to meet water quality objectives imposed by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, would protect the giant garter snake from effects of elevated selenium. There would be no loss of acres of land planted with rice as a result of these proposed actions. Although these are transfers with regard to Reclamation's involvement, there would be groundwater substitution.

The short duration of the water availability, the requirement that no native lands be converted without consultation with the USFWS, and the stringent requirements for transfers under applicable laws would preclude any impacts to wildlife, whether Federally listed or not.

As the Proposed Action is not expected to result in any direct or indirect impacts to biological resources, there would be no cumulative impacts.

Cultural Resources

Reclamation determined on March 9, 2012 that the Proposed Action has no potential to cause effects to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

Indian Sacred Sites

The Proposed Action would not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites. There would be no impacts to Indian sacred sites as a result of the Proposed Action.

Indian Trust Assets

Reclamation determined on June 26, 2012 that the Proposed Action would not impact ITA as there are none in the Proposed Action area.

Socioeconomic Resources

The Proposed Action would allow for continued water deliveries to SLWD, DPWD, PWD and WWD and would maintain the stability of the agricultural market and economical vitality for the San Joaquin Valley to some degree. The proposed transfer would not interfere with SWP or CVP priorities or operations.

The water service transactions are temporary actions and do not result in long-term increases in water supplies that would encourage urbanization or construction.

The Proposed Action may result in a stronger local agricultural economy during the program timeframe. Since water supply availability may allow permanent crops to be sustained during dry years, there may be beneficial cumulative impacts to socioeconomic resources as a result of the Proposed Action.

Environmental Justice

The Proposed Action would not cause dislocation, changes in employment, or increase flood, drought, or disease. The Proposed Action would not disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged or minority populations. Some amount of agricultural production that would not be sustained with the current water availability could continue with the resulting preservation of jobs. The unemployment rate in the vicinity of the Transfer Recipient Districts suggests that any actions that maintain seasonal jobs should be considered beneficial. Employment opportunities for low-income wage earners and minority population groups would be within historical conditions. Disadvantaged populations would not be subject to disproportionate impacts.

Air Quality

Most of the wells that would be pumped have electric motors. Two wells have diesel engines that meet California Air Resources Board and Environmental Protection Agency Tier 3 specifications. As such, the engines meet the emission requirements for compression engines as outlined in San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Rule 4702, Section 5.2.4 of EA 12-006. Projected emissions from these engines would be below the *de minimis* amounts specified in 40 CFR § 93.153. Therefore, a determination of general conformity under the Clean Air Act is not required, and there would be no air quality impacts associated with this Proposed Action.

All emissions result in a cumulative increase in pollutants within the air basin; however emissions from the Proposed Action are well below the *de minimis* thresholds.

Global Climate

The Proposed Action would result in the direct emissions of greenhouse gases through the use of diesel fuel. Greenhouse gases generated are expected to be extremely small compared to sources contributing to potential climate change since the movement of water under the Proposed Action would be conveyed mostly via electric pumps which would not result in the power plant exceeding

operating capacity, and, thus, the applicable emissions permit. The total greenhouse gas emissions from the diesel pumps would be far below the 25,000 metric tons per year threshold for reportable greenhouse gas emissions. As such, the Proposed Action would not result in a substantial change in greenhouse gases emissions, and there would be no adverse effect to global climate.