

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Buena Vista Water Storage District Water Use and Irrigation Efficiency Project

FONSI 12-07-MP

Recommended by:

Michael Inthavong
Natural Resources Specialist, MP-152
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: _____

Sheri Looper
CVP Water Resource Program Specialist
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: _____

Concurred by:

Lee Mao
Chief, Program Management Branch
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: _____

Approved by:

Richard Woodley
Regional Resources Division Manager
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: _____



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Regional Office
Sacramento, California

November 2012

This Page Left Intentionally Blank

Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that awarding Buena Vista Water Storage District (BVWSD) with a 2011 Water SMART Grant to help fund in-district improvements is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI [No. 12-07-MP]) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA), *Buena Vista Water Storage District Water Use and Irrigation Efficiency Project*, which is hereby incorporated by reference. The EA describes the existing environmental resources in the Proposed Action area, evaluates the effects of the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives on the resources, and proposes measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects.

Reclamation will provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the FONSI and EA.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to award BVWSD with a WaterSMART grant to help fund the Water Use and Irrigation Efficiency Project (Project). Building off past effective water conservation practices, the Project generally consists of site-specific improvements installing metered turnouts, automated control structures, variable frequency drives, and flow meters. The Project area includes BVWSD's service area and the Tule Elk State Natural Reserve (Elk Reserve) in Kern County, California.

BVWSD needs help funding construction, installation, and furnishing of equipment and related appurtenances. Reclamation proposes to award BVWSD with a WaterSMART grant to assist BVWSD in reducing seepage and evaporation losses, and improving their overall water-use efficiency through site-specific distribution system improvements.

As part of the Proposed Action, BVWSD will implement Environmental Protection Measures and Commitments as noted in Section 2.2.1 and Best Management Practices as noted in Section 2.2.2 of the EA. Construction will take approximately 4 months to complete, starting in late 2012 and finishing in early 2013.

Findings

Reclamation's determination that implementation of the Proposed Action will result in no significant impact to the quality of the human environment is supported by the referenced EA and is summarized in the following:

Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action will occur within previously identified disturbed contexts. Actions to the canals and laterals, including the installation of supervisory control and data acquisition equipment, will occur within existing facilities that have not been identified as historic

properties. The proposed undertaking has no potential to cause effects to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

Indian Trust Assets (ITA)

There are no tribes possessing legal property interests held in trust by the U.S. within the Affected Environment involved with the Proposed Action. The nearest ITA is the Santa Rosa Rancheria approximately 31 miles north/northwest of the project location. The Proposed Action has no potential to affect ITA.

Indian Sacred Sites

No Indian sacred sites have been identified within the footprint for the Proposed Action and therefore will not be affected.

Environmental Justice

There are no economically disadvantaged or minority populations within the affected environment that will be subject to disproportionate impacts due to the Proposed Action.

Water Resources

The Proposed Action will not increase or decrease surface water supplies BVWSD diverts from the State Water Project or Kern River.

While surface water lost due to seepage would have contributed to groundwater elevations, the water conserved could be used for wildlife enhancement, in-district irrigation, and in-county water marketing. It would be difficult to measure the changes to groundwater surface elevation due to the Proposed Action, but the loss in surface water seepage could be offset by the potential reduction in groundwater pumping. There would be no significant changes to the groundwater surface elevation as a result of the Proposed Action.

Biological Resources

Construction activities will occur outside of the nesting season for burrowing owl and other species (nesting raptors) protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Preconstruction surveys will be performed prior to ground disturbance. If surveys confirm presence of MBTA-protected species then avoidance and conservation measures will be implemented in coordination with the California Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) before proceeding with construction.

USFWS-approved preconstruction surveys will be conducted prior to ground disturbance for San Joaquin kit fox (SJKF), Tipton kangaroo rat (TKR), giant kangaroo rat (GKR), and Buena Vista Lake shrew (BVLS). Construction activities will only occur outside of kangaroo rat breeding season. If any small mammal burrows are found within the proposed construction zones during the preconstruction survey, these sites will be flagged with pin flags and their location recorded. Work areas, including staging areas, will be clearly defined with flagging or other highly visible marking and the smallest possible area will be disturbed. Movement of heavy equipment to and from the Proposed Action area(s) will be confined to existing roadways to minimize habitat disturbance. At the SWP Turnout and Main Drain Flume sites, surface disturbance will be confined to areas that do not exhibit the wetland plant associations considered habitat for BVLS

with an adequate buffer (not less than 200 feet). A biological monitor will stake and flag to exclude construction activities within 200 feet of potential habitat. No work will be conducted between sunset and sunrise within 0.5 mile of potential habitat.

If preconstruction surveys find no signs or presence of SJKF, TKR, GKR, and BVLS then it is unlikely they are within the action area and exclusionary fencing will be installed. If surveys find presence of these four protected species and adverse affects cannot be avoided, then the project activities at the location(s) will be halted and reconsultation with the USFWS may be required. As a result, Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action *is not likely to adversely affect* the SJKF, TKR, GKR, and BVLS.

Air Quality

Operation and construction emissions from the Proposed Action will be well below the *de minimis* threshold for Federal general conformity, as well as State and local thresholds. In addition, dust control measures such as applying water to ground-disturbing areas would help suppress fugitive dust emissions. The Proposed Action will not violate any Federal, State, or local air quality standards for the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin.

Cumulative Impacts

When taking into consideration other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, the Proposed Action will not contribute to impacts that could significantly affect the quality of the human environment.