

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Transfer of Base Supply Water and Central Valley Project Water by Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District to the Colusa Drain Mutual Water Company

FONSI 13-01-NCAO

Recommended by:

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Introduction

In conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate and disclose any potential impacts of approving a request by Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (GCID) to transfer of up to 45,000 acre-feet (af) of water to the Colusa Drain Mutual Water Company (Company). The GCID believes it can meet this request with a combination of Base Supply and Project Water, as defined in Contract No. 14-06-200-855A-R-1 (Contract 855A) between GCID and Reclamation. In accordance with the terms of a transfer agreement or agreements (Transfer Agreement), GCID proposes to provide this water to the Company for lands outside GCID's boundaries, but that are within the same sub-basin as GCID's lands, and are either contiguous to GCID's boundaries, or otherwise conveniently served from the Colusa Basin Drain (Colusa Drain). Under the terms of Contract 855A, the GCID must obtain Reclamation written consent to such transfers.

Alternatives Including Proposed Action

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would consist of Reclamation not consenting to GCID's transfer of Base Supply and Project Water to the Company and there would be no change in GCID's water management methods. The Company would continue to use return flow from the Drain as its principle water resource and may in some years continue to experience inadequate water to support its irrigation needs.

Proposed action

Reclamation proposes to consent to GCID's proposal to the annual transfer of up to 45,000 af of water, comprised of up to 30,000 af of Project Water and up to 15,000 af of Base Supply water, to the Company annually from June through September, commencing with contract year 2012 and continuing through contract year 2015.

Under the proposed Transfer Agreement, each year GCID would inform the Company how much Base Supply and Project Water is expected to be available for purchase by the Company on a monthly basis during the upcoming irrigation season. Monthly quantities could change at the sole discretion of GCID at any time during the irrigation season. GCID would deliver transfer water through existing drainage locations to the Colusa Drain, pursuant to Contract 855A, and in accordance with water availability terms and conditions as identified in the Transfer Agreement between GCID and the Company.

The Proposed Action Alternative is also subject to the following conditions:

- Transferred water, and runoff from Company lands, will comply with all federal, state, local and tribal law, and requirements imposed for protection of the environment and Indian Trust Assets;

- The water would not be used to place untilled (within three years) or new lands into agricultural production, or to convert undeveloped land to other uses;
- The existing drainage facilities are adequate for the transferred water;
- The Proposed Action Alternative will not interfere with the normal CVP operations;
- The Proposed Action Alternative will not require the construction of any new water conveyance, pumping, diversion, recharge, storage or recovery facilities;
- The Company will be prohibited from selling, exchanging, or otherwise disposing of the transferred water, except to a water user within the Company's Service Area, without the prior written consent of Reclamation; and
- This transfer action will be subject to CEQA review.

Findings

Based on the attached EA, Reclamation finds that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. As a consequence, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

The attached EA describes the existing environmental resources in the Proposed Action area and evaluates the effects of the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives on the resources. Effects on several environmental resources were examined and found to be absent or minor. This analysis is provided in the attached EA, and the analysis in the EA is hereby incorporated by reference.

Following are the reasons why the impacts of the Proposed Action are not significant:

Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action does not involve the types of activities that have the potential to affect historic properties pursuant to the regulations at 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1). Land use would remain unchanged and no new construction or new ground disturbing activities will take place.

Air Quality

Under the Proposed Action, water supplies would move from GCID to the Company by either gravity or electric pumps which would not produce significant emissions that impact air quality. Therefore, a conformity analysis would not be required and there would be no impact to air quality as a result of the Proposed Action.

Indian Trust Assets

No Indian lands, public domain allotments, or other resources that could be considered Indian Trust Assets, are affected by the Proposed Action. The nearest ITA is the Santa Rosa Rancheria located approximately 23 miles due east of the Proposed Action area.

Indian Sacred Site

Reclamation has determined that there would be no impacts to Indian sacred sites as a result of the Proposed Action because it would not affect the physical integrity of sacred sites or limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites.

Endangered Species Act

Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action would not negatively affect any federal or state-listed species or any critical habitat because the action is merely to transfer water from one area to another subject to a number of agreed upon conditions that prevent harm to Federal and State-listed species of concern. These conditions include: the condition of no net increase in irrigable acres above 126,916 acres to another and maintain existing habitat values pursuant to authorities allowing the transfer of Base Supply and Project Water. As a result, no consultation with either the National Marine Fisheries Service or the USFWS is required.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Proposed Action would not change the land use patterns of the cultivated or fallowed fields that do have some value to listed species of birds protected by the MBTA; therefore, the Proposed Action would not affect birds protected by the MBTA.

National Historic Preservation Act

The Proposed Action would facilitate the flow of water through existing facilities to existing users. No new construction or ground disturbing activities would occur as part of the Proposed Action. Therefore, these activities have no potential to affect historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

Land Use

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, there would be no new construction or excavation. Native or untilled land (fallow for three years or more) would not be cultivated and irrigated with transfer water. The Proposed Action Alternative would not increase or decrease water supplies that would result in a change in land development. Additionally, the Company would be prohibited from selling, exchanging, or otherwise disposing of the transferred water, except to a water user within the Company's Service Area, without the prior written consent of Reclamation. In summary, current land use would be maintained under the Proposed Action Alternative.

Water Resources

There will be no increase in the total number of acres irrigated, or increase in the quantity of water used over what could have occurred within the district in any given year, absent the transfer. In complying with this limitation, there would be no increase in irrigated acres, and therefore the quantity of water used within GCID's Service Area. Therefore, it is assumed there would be no change in the quantity of water diverted by GCID, or in the amount of return flows

from such diversions whether the water is used within GCID or on other lands outside the district that may be eligible for transfer water. In summary, whether GCID uses the Base Supply within the district, or on eligible lands outside the district, the depletion of this water source, as a whole, would remain the same.

The transfer of water would help maintain or slightly improve water quality in Service Areas of the GCID and Company. Changes in water volumes and water quality would be most noticeable in the uppermost reaches of the Colusa Basin Drain. In contrast, the quantity of return water entering the much larger Sacramento River would be very small and likely immeasurable. Additionally, the return water from the Drain is regulated for water quality by State and Federal Regulations. Therefore, no adverse affects of this return flow to the Sacramento River water quality would be anticipated.

Use of groundwater as a water source for irrigation within the Service Area of GCID would likely remain the same as the No Action Alternative, whereas a slight reduction in groundwater use on the Service Areas of the Company would likely occur in the no action alternative. The reduction in use on Company land would primarily stem from greater water availability and lower salinities of transfer water in comparison to groundwater resources.

Cropping patterns would remain the same as the No Action Alternative, the use of pesticides or fertilizers would be anticipated to be the same as the No Action Alternative. Therefore, there would be no change in the quality of the groundwater due to the Proposed Action.

Biological Resources

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the water would be conveyed in existing facilities to established agricultural lands as in the No Action Alternative. Transferred water surplus to GCID's needs would be moved to the Company's Service Area, providing greater assurance that water would be available to maintain existing habitats. Additionally, the transfer water and return flows from Company lands would comply with all federal, state, local and tribal law, and requirements imposed for protection of the environment. As a consequence, the Proposed Action Alternative would have no adverse effect to any listed species or critical habitat.

Socioeconomic Resources

Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would allow continued farming practices on existing agricultural land. Improved quantities and quality of water would help to maintain agricultural productivity which in turn, is likely to help to maintain the local economy.

Environmental Justice

Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would help maintain agricultural production and farm worker employment. Consequently, implementing the Proposed Action Alternative would likely benefit, rather than harm, any minority or disadvantaged populations within the Proposed Action area.

Cumulative Effects

The Proposed Action will not result in any additions to irrigated lands or otherwise induce land use changes. Rather, the intended effect is to maintain current land use and prevent deterioration of existing agricultural practices; therefore there are no anticipated cumulative effects from the Proposed Action.