

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Execution of Warren Act Contracts for Storage and Conveyance Of Non-CVP Water from Placer County Water Agency to Westlands Water District

FONSI 13-07-MP

Recommended: _____ Date: _____
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U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Sacramento, California

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INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Reclamation will enter into a Warren Act contract with Westlands Water District (WWD) to facilitate the transfer of 20,000 acre-feet (AF) of Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) water to WWD in 2013. The Proposed Action will help alleviate water supply shortages within WWD, which have been exacerbated by dry conditions and low water allocations. WWD faces deficits in their water supplies in 2013, and similar conditions are envisioned for 2014. The result of this shortfall has been and will be the loss of agricultural crops and potential damage to perennial crops. The potential loss of permanent crops such as orchards or vineyards represents a disruption because such crops require years of investment and planning, making their loss effectively irreparable. This transfer will prevent some of the potential damage from the low allocations this year.

Reclamation prepared the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) in May 2013, to evaluate the effects of the Proposed Action.

PROPOSED ACTION

Under the proposed transfer, PCWA will release water from its Middle Fork Project reservoirs into the Middle Fork American River, which subsequently flows into the North Fork American River. From the North Fork American River, the released water will flow into Folsom Reservoir by June 1, 2013, or later depending on water temperatures. The 20,000 AF from the North Fork American River will benefit the coldwater pool in Folsom Reservoir for coldwater fish habitat. Reclamation will release water from Folsom Reservoir into the lower American River, the Sacramento River, and through the Delta to Banks or Jones Pumping Plant. Through the Warren Act contract with WWD, from Jones Pumping Plant, water will be conveyed through the Delta-Mendota Canal and pumped into O'Neill Forebay where it will be diverted either for immediate WWD use or for storage in the federal share of San Luis Reservoir for later release to the federal side of the San Luis Canal for conveyance to the Coalinga Canal for WWD use. If the Banks Pumping Plant is used instead of Jones Pumping Plant, water will be conveyed through the California Aqueduct to the O'Neill Forebay where it will be diverted either for immediate WWD use or for storage in San Luis Reservoir for later release to the Federal side of the San Luis Canal for conveyance to the Coalinga Canal for WWD use.

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. 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. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46). The analysis provided in the attached EA is incorporated by reference.

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

1. The Proposed Action will not affect air quality or increase greenhouse gas emissions.
2. The Proposed Action will not affect water quality. There will be no decrease in river flows or reservoir storage. Temporary increased storage at Folsom Reservoir and increased flows in the Lower American River and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta may temporarily benefit water quality.
3. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect biological resources. American River flows under the proposed action will not fluctuate beyond existing minimum and maximum ranges. The amount of water being transferred will not increase the magnitude of the velocity and flow above the peaking levels. In addition, the anticipated 20,000 AF increase to Folsom Reservoir from the North Fork American River by June 1, 2013, or later depending on water temperatures, will benefit the coldwater fishery habitat in the reservoir.
4. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect land use or agriculture. The additional water supply will not induce growth or result in existing land uses being converted to new land uses but will reduce the loss of agricultural crops and potential damage to perennial crops in WWD from low water allocations.
5. The Proposed Action will not affect historic properties.
6. The Proposed Action will not affect Indian Trust Assets.
7. The Proposed Action will not affect Indian sacred sites.
8. The Proposed Action will not have any impact on minority or low-income populations.
9. The Proposed Action will not result in adverse cumulative effects.
10. There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial.