

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Finding of No Significant Impact

Addition of Westlands Water District to the Arvin-Edison Water District and Westside Mutual Water Company Exchange Program

FONSI-12-030

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Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that addition of Westside Mutual Water District (Westside) member lands in Westlands Water District (Westlands) to the Arvin-Edison Water Storage District (Arvin) and Westside Exchange Program (Exchange Program) is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the human environment, so an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) 12-030, *Addition of Westlands Water District to the Arvin-Edison Water District and Westside Mutual Water Company Exchange Program* and supplements Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) 11-039, *Arvin Edison Water Storage District / Westside Mutual Water Company Exchange (2011-2016)*.

Background

In November 2011, Reclamation signed a FONSI for the Exchange Program, which involves exchanging Arvin's Central Valley Project (CVP) water supplies with Westside's California State Water Project (SWP) and other water supplies. The potential impacts to the human environment as a result of the Exchange Program were analyzed in EA/FONSI 11-039.

The existing Exchange Program involves delivery of Arvin's supplies to Westside member lands as exchange water, based on a 1 for 1 or "bucket for bucket" basis, up to 50,000 acre-feet (af). Westside diverts and uses a portion of Arvin's CVP water through a combination of existing turnouts. In exchange for Arvin's supplies, Westside delivers up to 50,000 af on a variable, as-needed and available basis a combination of Westside's: SWP water supply, CVP Section 215 water, Kern River water, and/or City of Bakersfield Surplus Kern River water. The Exchange Program began in 2011 and is in effect through February 29, 2016 or 50,000 af, whichever comes first.

In April 2012, Reclamation received a request from Westside to add their member lands and water supplies in Westlands to the Exchange Program (see Appendix A of EA-12-030 for a more detailed breakdown of Westside's member lands and water supplies in Westlands). The additional points of delivery and additional supplies from Westside member lands in Westlands are the only change proposed from the action analyzed in EA/FONSI-11-039. Exchange of Arvin's and Westside's water supplies will continue through February 29, 2016, consistent with EA/FONSI 11-039 and the current Exchange Program.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to approve a series of exchanges between Arvin and Westside to include Westlands as a "Recipient Water District" and "Supplier Water District", for the benefit of Westside member lands within Westlands. The amount of water delivered may vary according to

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Westside and Arvin’s needs and available conveyance capacities in existing facilities. The Exchange Program will be in effect from June 2013 through February 29, 2016 or 50,000 AF, whichever comes first.

Westside’s Recipient Water Districts will be updated to include Westlands. The points of delivery to Westlands will include existing turnouts on the San Luis Canal. The previously analyzed points of delivery on the Friant-Kern Canal, California Aqueduct, and Cross Valley Canal for the delivery of CVP water from Arvin to Westside and from Westside to Arvin will continue to be used as described in EA-11-039.

Westlands will be included as a Supplier Water District for return water to Arvin under the Exchange Program to the extent that Westside member supplies of annual CVP contract water are utilized as return supplies to Arvin. Westside’s member landowners have the ability to annually apply for and receive a pro rata share of Westlands’ CVP allocation and to participate in Westlands’ Supplemental Water Program. Westlands contract supplies will only be utilized up to the quantity of supplies brought into Westlands for use on Westside member lands under the terms of the Exchange Program.

The Proposed Action will occur on mutually agreeable schedules of Reclamation, Westside, Arvin, and the Recipient Water Districts. Additionally, prior to the delivery of water into the Cross Valley Canal, appropriate coordination and approvals must take place with Kern County Water Agency.

Environmental Commitments

Arvin, Westside, Westlands, and Reclamation must implement the following environmental protection measures to reduce environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action (Table 1). Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified will be fully implemented. Reclamation’s South-Central California Area Office has initiated an Environmental Commitment Program in order to implement, track and evaluate the environmental commitments developed for the Proposed Action.

Table 1 Environmental Protection Measures and Commitments

Resource	Protection Measure
General	Use of the water will comply with all federal, state, local, and tribal law, and requirements imposed for protection of the environment and Indian Trust Assets.
Land	The approval letter for the Proposed Action (agreed to by Reclamation, Arvin, and Westside) will require that no land conversions within Arvin’s service area and Westside land holdings will occur as a result of the Proposed Action. If land conversions related to this action are proposed subsequent to the Proposed Action, separate environmental review and analysis will be required.
Land / Water	Neither water delivered to Westside or returned to Arvin will be used to place untilled or new lands into production in either Arvin or Westside or cause current agricultural lands to be fallowed
Land / Water	The water delivered to Arvin and Westside will be used for beneficial purposes and in accordance with Federal Reclamation law and guidelines, as applicable.
Land / Water	The water will be used within the CVP and Friant permitted place of use.

Resource	Protection Measure
Water	The delivery and return of Arvin’s water will occur with the approval of the respective agencies governing and/or managing said water infrastructure and will not impact the Friant-Kern Canal, California Aqueduct, San Luis Canal, and Cross Valley Canal; nor interfere with their respective ability to deliver water under normal operations and said deliveries will conform to the delivery and operation policies for all facilities.

Findings

Reclamation’s finding that implementation of the Proposed Action will result in no significant impact to the quality of the human environment is supported by the following findings.

Water Resources

Under the Proposed Action, Westside’s member lands in Westlands will be added as potential recipients and suppliers under the Exchange Program. Westside and Arvin will have more flexibility to manage their water resources; additionally they can still exchange water as described in EA-11-039. Neither Westside nor Arvin will experience a net gain or loss in their respective water supplies over the term of the Exchange Program, since the exchange will be “bucket for bucket” over the five-year contract period. Since the agreement will only allow transfers on an “as available and feasible” basis, both entities will still have sufficient water resources to provide to their agricultural customers. Westside intends to use only surface water to return water to Arvin, which can then be used for direct delivery for irrigation and/or additional groundwater banking in Arvin’s existing recharge facilities. With the ability to regulate its water supplies by controlling the timing of delivery, the Proposed Action will provide Arvin with surface water reliability and may decrease reliance on groundwater pumping by Arvin and its landowners during drought years.

With use of the environmental commitments listed in Table 1, the Proposed Action will not interfere with the normal operations of any district involved with the exchange, nor will it impede any SWP or CVP obligations to deliver water to other contractors or to local fish and wildlife habitat. Arvin has conveyance and/or storage capacity under various contracts and/or exchange programs in the Delta-Mendota Canal, San Luis Canal, San Luis Reservoir, Friant-Kern Canal, Cross-Valley Canal, Kern River, and California Aqueduct and will operate the exchange within those rights and capacities. There will not be a measurable direct effect on groundwater resources; however, there will be slight beneficial effects to surface water supply reliability, since water management as a result of the Proposed Action will be improved in critical times of shortage for both entities.

Cumulative Impacts

There will be no net gain or loss to districts’ surface water or groundwater supplies since the exchange will be “bucket for bucket” after considering minor conveyance losses, if any. Groundwater pumping will not increase, but may decrease as a result of the Proposed Action. Utilization of existing conveyance facilities will require coordination with the appropriate oversight agency to insure that the scheduling of the Proposed Action will not hinder the normal operations of those facilities. There will be beneficial effects to the balancing of water supplies of both Arvin and Westside by managing supplies temporally between the two entities. Considering the above, there will be no contribution to cumulative impacts to water resources.

Land Use

Under the Proposed Action, Westside will have more flexibility to manage their diverse water resources. In dry years, the permanent crops (orchards) can avoid decreased yield. The productivity of prime farmland may be maintained.

Cumulative Impacts

There will be slightly beneficial cumulative impacts to land use under the Proposed Action. The existing orchards and processing facility will remain in place. In dry years, the permanent crops may avoid possible losses, thereby preventing further ground disturbance and maintaining the ongoing productivity of prime farmland beyond the term of the Proposed Action.

Biological Resources

Under the Proposed Action, there will be no impact to biological resources. Although the western burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk, and San Joaquin kit fox may use the area, the exchanges will be one-for-one with no land use change, no construction and no new diversions of water.

Cumulative Impacts

As the Proposed Action will not result in any direct or indirect impacts to biological resources, it will not contribute cumulatively to any impacts.

Cultural Resources

There will be no modification of CVP storage or conveyance facilities and no activities that will result in ground disturbance under the Proposed Action. On May 24, 2013, Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Region, Cultural Resources Branch, determined that the Proposed Action involves the type of activity that has no potential to cause effects on historic properties, pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

Indian Sacred Sites

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

Indian Trust Assets

Reclamation determined on May 24, 2013 that the Proposed Action will not impact Indian Trust Assets as there are none in the Proposed Action area

Socioeconomic Resources

Under the Proposed Action, Westside will have more flexibility to manage their diverse water resources. In dry years, permanent crops (orchards) may avoid failure or decreased yield, preventing losses to capital investment in permanent crops and facilities. The productivity of the prime farmland may be maintained, and the processing facility can continue operations, providing employment opportunities. Compared to the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action will provide a slight benefit to socioeconomic conditions in the area.

Cumulative Impacts

Since the Proposed Action will result in slightly beneficial socioeconomic impacts, it will provide slightly beneficial impacts when combined with the results of any past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions.

Environmental Justice

The Proposed Action does not propose any features that will result in adverse human health or environmental effects, have any physical effects on minority or low-income populations, and/or alter socioeconomic conditions of populations that reside or work in the vicinity of the Proposed Action.

Air Quality

No construction or modification of facilities will be needed under the Proposed Action. CVP water will be moved either via gravity or electric pumps which will not produce emissions that impact air quality. Therefore, a conformity analysis is not required under the Clean Air Act and there will be no impact to air quality as a result of the Proposed Action.

Global Climate

The Proposed Action will not involve physical changes to the environment or construction activities that could impact global climate change. Generating power plants that produce electricity to operate the electric pumps produce carbon dioxide that can potentially contribute to GHG emissions; however, water under the Proposed Action is water that will be delivered from existing facilities under either alternative and is therefore part of the existing conditions.