

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

Del Puerto Water District Alternate Points of Delivery on the California Aqueduct

Draft FONSI-13-033

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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 an environmental impact statement is not required for Del Puerto Water District Alternate Points of Delivery on the California Aqueduct. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) 13-033, *Del Puerto Water District Alternate Points of Delivery on the California Aqueduct*, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

Del Puerto Water District (Del Puerto) is a Central Valley Project (CVP) water service contractor that receives water from turnouts on the Delta-Mendota Canal. Oak Flat Water District (Oak Flat) is a neighboring district that is a State Water Project (SWP) contractor that receives water from turnouts on the California Aqueduct, which is a SWP facility. Both Districts are within the CVP/SWP Consolidated Place of Use.

Del Puerto and Oak Flat share several landowners and water users in common. Water delivery to certain Del Puerto lands would be more efficient if delivered through Oak Flat's existing SWP turnouts and facilities, due to their location relative to the California Aqueduct and configuration existing landowner distribution systems.

Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would approve exchanges and additional points of delivery of Del Puerto's CVP supply. In particular, Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources would approve SWP Turnouts #B, #C, and # D in reach 2B of the California Aqueduct as alternate points of delivery for up to 3,966 acre-feet per year of water supplies for delivery to CVP contracted lands within Del Puerto's boundaries, while concurrently exchanging a like amount of CVP supply back to the SWP at O'Neill Forebay.

Environmental Commitments

Reclamation, Del Puerto, Oak Flat, and the associated landowners will 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 would 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 |
|----------------------|---|
| Biological Resources | The Proposed Action does not include, nor does this EA evaluate, the conversion of any land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. The Proposed Action must not change the land use patterns of cultivated or fallowed fields that may have some value to listed species or birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. |
| Biological Resources | To avoid effects to fish and wildlife, or their habitats, the Proposed Action cannot alter the flow regime of natural water bodies such as rivers, streams, creeks, ponds, pools, wetlands, etc. |
| Biological Resources | The water involved in the Proposed Action shall be conveyed using only existing facilities; no new construction or modification of existing facilities is permitted. |

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, up to 3,966 acre-feet of water per year would be delivered to the Del Puerto farmlands via SWP Turnouts #B, #C, and # D in reach 2B of the California Aqueduct, and Oak Flat’s existing systems where necessary. The water could more easily flow via gravity, rather than pumping. Between the lands and O’Neill Forebay, there would be a negligible decrease in flows in the California Aqueduct and a negligible increase in flows in the DMC. There would be no net changes in either SWP or CVP water supplies. There would be no major changes necessary in CVP and SWP operations.

Cumulative Impacts

Since there would be no net changes in water supplies, only slight changes in water flow in the two canals and no major changes to operations, there would be no cumulative impacts to water supplies as a result of the Proposed Action.

Land Use

The water exchanged and used under the Proposed Action would otherwise be used to irrigate existing farmlands that are currently served by Del Puerto. The water would not be used to place untilled or new lands into production, or to convert undeveloped land to other uses. Therefore, there would be no change to land use.

Biological Resources

The effects of the Proposed Action are similar to the No Action alternative. A majority of the Action Area consists of active farmlands that no longer provide suitable habitat for federally protected species. The remainder of the Action Area consists of grazing lands with some small fragmented pieces of natural land that could potentially provide habitat for some listed species. The water involved in the Proposed Action would be used to irrigate the same lands as the No Action Alternative. Fallowed lands that have been untilled for three or more consecutive years would not be converted as a result of the Proposed Action. The land use patterns of cultivated and fallowed fields that could provide suitable habitat for listed species or birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act would not be changed as a result of the Proposed Action. Therefore, there would be no take of migratory birds as a result of the Proposed Action. No

natural stream courses would be altered to carry out the Proposed Action, so there would be no effects to federally protected fish species. No critical habitat occurs within the Action Area, so none would be affected by the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action does not include any construction or other ground-disturbing activities. With the implementation of the environmental commitments listed in Table 1, Reclamation has determined that there would be No Effect to listed species or designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. §1531 et. seq.) resulting from the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Impacts

Existing loss of habitat from urbanization and the expansion of agricultural lands, that cumulatively impacts listed species and their habitats, is expected to occur regardless of whether or not the Proposed Action is implemented. The Proposed Action is not expected to contribute to cumulative habitat loss because the water would be used in a way that is consistent with current practices. There would be no new cumulative impacts to biological resources as a result of the Proposed Action.

Cultural Resources

There would be no modification of CVP storage or conveyance facilities and no activities that would result in ground disturbance under the Proposed Action. On May 31, 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 would not limit access to ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites, since no new construction or ground disturbing activities would occur as part of the Proposed Action. Therefore, there would be no impacts to Indian Sacred Sites as a result of the Proposed Action.

Indian Trust Assets

Reclamation determined on May 31, 2013 that the Proposed Action would not impact Indian Trust Assets as there are none in the Proposed Action area.

Environmental Justice

The Proposed Action does not propose any features that would 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 new facilities would be needed as a result of the Proposed Action, so no construction-related emissions would be produced. The water in the Proposed Action would move via gravity, hence there would be no emissions from pumping. As a result, there would be no impacts to air quality as a result of either the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative, and a conformity analysis is not required.

Energy Use and Global Climate

The Proposed Action would neither involve physical changes to the environment nor construction activities that could impact global climate change. Generating power plants that produce electricity to operate the electric pumps produce carbon dioxide that could potentially contribute to GHG emissions. Compared to the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would require less pumping, and hence less energy use. The efficiency of pumps relies on many factors, so the reduction in greenhouse gases was not quantified, but any reduction in energy use would have a slight beneficial effect regarding global climate.

Cumulative Impacts

Since any increase in greenhouse gas emissions would result in a cumulative effect to the environment, any effects of the Proposed Action would be cumulative. As discussed under the Proposed Action, there may be a slight beneficial effect regarding energy use, and hence a slight reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.