

RECLAMATION

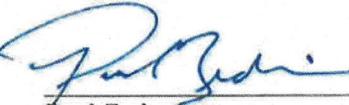
Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Supplement to the Program Allowing Five-Year Warren Act Contracts for
Conveyance of Groundwater in the Tehama-Colusa and Corning Canals – Contract
Years 2013 through 2017 (March 1, 2013, through February 28, 2018)**

Final FONSI 14-02-NCAO

Recommended by:



Date: 3/3/2014

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U.S. Department of the Interior
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March 2014

Introduction

In 2013, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for Five-Year Warren Act Contracts for Conveyance of Groundwater in the Tehama-Colusa and Corning Canals – Contract Years 2013 through 2017 (EA 13-03). The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed on May 15, 2013. Since that time, a formal declaration for a “Drought State of Emergency” by California has agricultural interests served by the Tehama-Colusa Canal (TCC) and Corning Canal (CC) (collectively, Canals) concerned that Central Valley Project Water (Project Water) allocations may be severely reduced and the previously approved quantities of groundwater that may be conveyed in Reclamation facilities may be inadequate to meet their needs. As a consequence, Reclamation proposes to modify its proposed action to: 1) accommodate requests by water and irrigation districts (Districts) to discharge greater quantities of groundwater for conveyance in the Canals; and 2) change the water quality criteria to determine eligibility of groundwater discharges to the Canals during years that are classified as being in a “Drought State of Emergency” by California.

In accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Northern California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation, has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for further review of these modifications. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation’s Environmental Assessment (EA) Number EA-14-02-NCAO, *Supplement to the Program Allowing Five-Year Warren Act Contracts for Conveyance of Groundwater in the Tehama-Colusa and Corning Canals – Contract Years 2013 through 2017 (March 1, 2013, through February 28, 2018)*, which is incorporated by reference and attached.

Alternatives Including Proposed Action

No Action Alternative

Reclamation would not approve water district requests to convey additional water within the Canals beyond those approved in EA-13-03. Similarly, the water quality criteria used to determine which groundwater wells could participate in WACs would remain the same as EA 13-03

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action now includes a 35.3 TAF increase in the quantity of water that could be conveyed in the Canals raising the total to 79.8 TAF. This increase is in response to requests by six water districts served by the Canals that included Colusa County WD, Davis WD, Glenn Valley WD, Westside WD, Dunnigan WD and Glenn Colusa ID (Table 1 of the EA). New District-quantities would apply for the entire time period considered in EA 13-03, or March 1, 2013, through February 28, 2018.

In addition to the environmental commitments identified in Section 2.2.1 of EA 13-03, this supplement incorporates new water quality criteria for determining the eligibility of groundwater to be discharged to and conveyed in the Canals in “Drought Years” (See Appendix A of the EA). “Drought Year” criteria would only apply in years declared as a “Drought State of Emergency” (DSOE) by California, such as 2014. The “Drought Year” criteria are based on agricultural standards with aquatic life standards added for a few constituents where agricultural standards were not available. In contrast, the water quality criteria for years other than Drought Years (Non-Drought Years) are more stringent, comprised mainly of criteria for aquatic life with a few agricultural standards (See EA 13-03). The “Drought Year” criteria are intended to protect the beneficial use for agricultural water supply. To meet this goal, review of current and projected operations in the Canals would be conducted by each District that may have concerns. If a review identifies a water quality concern and it cannot be resolved, the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority or Reclamation would have the jurisdiction to stop any discharge to the Canals at any time.

Findings

Reclamation’s determination that implementation of the Proposed Action will result in no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment is supported by the attached Supplemental EA and is summarized in the following:

- The conveyance of additional Non-Project in the Canals would not cause competition between Districts for space in the Canals, but it would maximize distribution of groundwater to meet irrigation needs of participating Districts.
- Water quality concerns are not anticipated with a change in water quality criteria that determines the eligibility of specific groundwater wells (Non-Project water) that is discharged to and conveyed in the Canals in “Drought Years.”
- There would be no significant impact to groundwater resources; each participating District would be limited to pumping a quantity below “safe yield” as established in any groundwater management plan or any county-specific requirement as applicable, in order to prevent groundwater overdraft and avoid adverse impacts.
- There would be no significant impacts to land use practices. The additional Non-Project water that could be conveyed would help meet existing irrigation needs that help maintain existing land use practices.
- Air quality would not be impacted as all pumps would operate in compliance with all rules and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels so there would be no adverse impacts.
- The Proposed Action would not affect any listed species because the Proposed Action would not affect these species or their habitat.
- The Proposed Action would maintain agribusiness that supports local and regional economies.
- The Proposed Action will not result in any adverse cumulative impacts