EA/ FONSI Log Number: EA-09-128

Transfer of Central Valley Project Water to Kern County Water Agency in Exchange for State Water Project Water Delivered to San Luis Water District and Westlands Water District

South-Central California Area Office

Date:

To:	Wildlife Biologist	SCC 423		N Gruenhagen	10/05/09
	Acting Natural Resource Specialist	SCC 411		M Kinsey	10/05/2009
	Secretary	SCC 101		P Escobar	10/6/09
	Chief, Resource Division	SCC 400		L Myers	10/05/2009
	Deputy Area Manager	SCC 430		T Buelna	10/05/2009
	Wildlife Biologist	SCC 423		N Gruenhagen	10/05/09

Cost Authority Number:
From: Ned Gruenhagen

Subject: Review and signing of EA/FONSI

Please review the attached EA/FONSI and route it according to the order on the list. When your review is finished, please date and initial this routing document, and sign on the first page of the FONSI if your name is listed. However, if you have comments or questions please contact the Environmental Team or the proponent of the action. When everyone has signed the FONSI, please return it to Ned Gruenhagen.

Thank you.

Ready for Central Files 10/06/09

Copies to: MP-3730 (1 copies)
Project Proponent (1 Copy): Rena Ballew (SCC-414)
RMD Files
E-Copy (M.Yow)

RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Transfer of Central Valley Project Water to Kern County Water Agency in Exchange for State Water Project Water Delivered to San Luis Water District and Westlands Water District

FONSI-09-128

Recommended by:

Date: 10/05/09

Ned Gruenhagen
Wildlife Biologist
South-Central California Area Office

Concurred by:

Date: 10/05/2009

Michael Kinsey
Acting Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist
South-Central California Area Office

Concurred by:

Date: 10/05/2009

for Laura Myers
Chief, Resources Management Division
South-Central California Area Office

Approved by:

Date: 10/05/2009

Tony Buelna
Acting Deputy Area Manager
South-Central California Area Office

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Transfer of Central Valley Project Water to Kern County Water Agency in Exchange for State Water Project Water Delivered to San Luis Water District and Westlands Water District

In accordance with the National Environment Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for the approval of four transfers of Central Valley Project (CVP) water to San Luis Water District (SLWD) and Westlands Water District (WWD), totaling up to 18,750 acre feet (AF). One transfer will be from Fresno Irrigation District (FID) for up to 6,250 AF to SLWD and up to 7,500 AF to WWD and one from Orange Cove Irrigation District (OCID) for up to 5,000 AF to SLWD. The delivery of the CVP water supplies from FID and OCID to SLWD and WWD will be facilitated by exchanges. Kern County Water Agency (KCWA) would make available in SLR an equivalent amount of its 2009 SWP Table A contract water for subsequent delivery, no later than October 31, 2010, to SLWD and WWD via SWP facilities because there are no direct conveyance mechanisms. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) Number 09-128, *Transfer of Central Valley Project Water to Kern County Water Agency in Exchange for State Water Project Water Delivered to San Luis Water District and Westlands Water District*, dated October 2009, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

The State of California is currently experiencing unprecedented water management challenges during a third consecutive year of drought. Both the State and Federal water projects are forecasting very low storage conditions in all major reservoirs. Specifically for the CVP, additional factors have contributed to the reduction in total water supplies this year. These include: 1) low reservoir water supply conditions coming into 2009 from a dry 2007, 2008 and early 2009, and 2) limits placed on pumping at Jones Pumping Plant for purposes of meeting court-ordered delta smelt protections. Based on these factors, Reclamation declared a shortage in the amount of water available to South-of-Delta (SOD) contractors for the 2009 Contract Year (March 1 through February 28). Allocation of water from the CVP for 2009-10 is 10 percent to SOD contractors. Official projections of 2010-11 water year allocations range between 0-10% in a dry hydrology and 25-40% under a wet hydrology. At these low water supply allocations, SLWD and WWD will need additional water supplies just to keep permanent crops alive.

The purpose of the proposed transfers to allow expeditious water delivery is to assist in offsetting the effects of continued drought and regular supply constraints by increasing the volume of water available to SLWD and WWD to supplement anticipated water shortages in 2010.

Reclamation proposes to approve four transfers of CVP water to SLWD and WWD. The first transfer is from FID to SLWD for 6,250 AF. The next is from FID to WWD for 3,750 AF. The third is from FID to WWD for another 3,750 AF. The last is from OCID to SLWD for 5,000 AF. Since there are no direct conveyance mechanisms in place by which to accomplish direct

transfers, each of these transfers would be facilitated by exchanges of water through KCWA with KCWA exchanging a like amount of State Water Project Table A water in San Luis Reservoir for delivery to SLWD and WWD by October 31, 2010 for the transferred CVP water.

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:

FINDINGS

Water Resources

Surface Supplies. FID and OCID have sufficient water supplies to meet their water demands and will not be affected by the transfer. CVP and SWP facilities will not be impacted because the transferred water must be scheduled and approved by Reclamation and the California DWR. If a canal capacity prorate is required during the period this water is moving through the Friant-Kern Canal, the prorate priority shall be pursuant to the tiers defined in Sections VII-A and VII-B of the Operational Guidelines for Water Service, Friant Division, Central Valley Project dated March 18, 2005. Additionally, this transfer must be conducted in a manner that will not harm other Friant Division Long Term Contractors. No natural streams or water courses will be affected because no additional pumping or diversion will occur.

Groundwater Supplies. Groundwater resources will not be significantly influenced by the proposed action. The water will be efficiently applied and utilized by crops in the SLWD and WWD and only minor amounts will accrete to groundwater in these districts. The water transferred from FID and OCID will not accrete in the Kings subbasin, but this amount will be minor and insignificant relative to the subbasin supplies and amounts accreting from all other sources and therefore there will be no adverse impacts to water resources as a result of the Proposed Action.

Land Use

There will be no land use changes in FID and OCID as their water supplies will not be reduced below demands. Water supplies in KCWA will remain unchanged and land use will not change.

Although allocations of 2010 water are currently unknown, there likely will be a slight increase in actively cropped agricultural land in SLWD and WWD due to the ability of some established row crops to remain in production and the enhanced survival of orchards. This continued use of agricultural lands for its designated purpose will not result in any land use changes in SLWD or WWD. There will be a slightly positive impact on agricultural land in production in SLWD and WWD, due to the ability of some established row crops to remain in production and the enhanced survival of orchards.

Biological Resources

The Proposed Action will not involve the conversion of any land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. The relatively small amounts of water associated with the Proposed Action (when compared to the amount of water supply deficit) and the requirement that no native lands be converted without consultation with FWS will preclude impacts to wildlife, including federally listed species. Normal agricultural practices will result in some cropland fallowed in 2009 being

put in production in 2010 and vice-versa. The Proposed Action will not alter this phenomenon or measurably influence the impact of it. Critical habitat will not be affected by the Proposed Action. Habitat types required by most species in the affected area that are protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), are either absent or will not be affected. While the Proposed Action could reduce the fallowed acreage in SLWD and WWD in the short term (i.e. for one year), it will not sufficiently affect the pattern of use of agricultural lands that are cultivated or fallowed to sufficiently to alter their value to listed species or to birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Additionally, because no natural stream courses will be affected through flows or water quality, and no additional pumping from the Delta will occur, there will be no effects on listed fish species.

Cultural Resources

Under the Proposed Action, all transfers will occur through existing facilities and water will be provided within existing service area boundaries to areas that currently use water. The action will not result in modification of any existing facilities, construction of new facilities, change in land use, or growth. This action has no potential to cause effect to historic properties pursuant to the regulations at 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1) and therefore will not impact to cultural resources.

Indian Trust Assets

The proposed action does not affect Indian Trust Assets (ITA's). The nearest ITA is a Public Domain Allotment which is approximately 0.5 miles east of the project location.

Socioeconomic Resources

The Proposed Action will allow for water deliveries to be made to SLWD and WWD and these will help maintain the stability of the agricultural market and economical vitality for the San Joaquin Valley to some degree. The proposed exchanges will not interfere with SWP or CVP priorities or operations.

The transfers are temporary actions and will not result in long-term increases in water supplies that will encourage urbanization, construction or other land disturbing activities.

Environmental Justice

The Proposed Action will reduce dislocation and promote continued employment. The unemployment rate in the vicinity of SLWD and WWD suggests that actions that maintain seasonal jobs will be beneficial. Employment opportunities for low-income wage earners and minority population groups will be within historical conditions. The Proposed Action will not disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged or minority populations.

Global Climate Change

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) generated by the project is expected to be extremely small compared to sources contributing to potential climate change. The transfer of water will be mostly via gravity and little if any additional pumping will be required. The net balance of GHG resulting from the Proposed Action compared with the No Action Alternative is unknown but finite. While any increase in GHG emissions will add to the global inventory of gases that will contribute to global climate change, the Proposed Action will result in potentially minimal increases in GHG emissions and a net increase in GHG emissions among the pool of GHG will not be detectable.

Cumulative Impacts

The Proposed Action, when added to other actions, will not contribute to significant increases or decreases in environmental conditions. The proposed transfers, when added to other actions, do not significantly affect existing environmental conditions. The Proposed Action was found to have no impact on surface water or groundwater resources, biological resources, cultural resources, ITA's, socioeconomics and global climate change and therefore there is no contribution to cumulative impacts on these resources areas. Slight beneficial impacts to use of land for agricultural purpose and environmental justice are within the historical variations and will not contribute to cumulative impacts. Overall there will be no significant impacts from cumulative effects related to the Proposed Action.