

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Increase in Quantity for the Friant Division and Cross Valley Accelerated Water Transfer Program, 2011-2015

FONSI-11-063

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Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that the approval to increase the total quantity for the Friant Division and Cross Valley (CV) Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors' Accelerated Water Transfer Program (AWTP) is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) number SEA-11-063, *Increase in Cap Total for the Friant Division and Cross Valley Accelerated Water Transfer Program, 2011-2015*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Reclamation intends to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft FONSI and Draft SEA during a 15-day public review period.

Background / Proposed Action

Reclamation has historically acknowledged water transfers and/or exchanges between CVP contractors geographically situated within the same region and who are provided water service through the same CVP facilities under an AWTP. The most recent AWTP for Friant Division and CV CVP contractors was analyzed under Environmental Assessment (EA) number EA-10-052, which analyzed a five-year AWTP from 2011 through 2015, and a FONSI was signed in February 2011. Both EA and FONSI are hereby incorporated by reference.

Due to what is referred to as a wet year, the Friant Division and CV contractors have fully utilized the AWTP in order to shift CVP water supplies from areas of low demand (at the time of request) to areas of greater demand. As a result, the annual quantity of 255,000 acre-feet (AF) for Contract Year 2011 (March 1, 2011 through February 29, 2012) is rapidly being used up and an increase is needed in order to accommodate anticipated future transfers and/or exchanges for the rest of the year, as well as subsequent years as part of the current AWTP if hydrologic conditions continue in trend. The scope of the SEA is the same as that covered in EA-10-052, except for the increase in total quantity that the participants can transfer and/or exchange per Contract Year. The annual quantity will increase by another 45,000 AF, which will allow for up to 300,000 AF of CVP water to be transferred and/or exchanged under the AWTP for Contract Years 2011 through 2015 (ending February 29, 2016).

Findings

Reclamation's determination that implementation of the Proposed Action will result in no significant impact to the quality of the human environment is supported by the following:

Water Resources

The Proposed Action will not increase or decrease the amount of CVP water each district receives under contract with Reclamation. Transfers between districts will help supplement any surface water shortage that a particular water district, or districts, could be experiencing at that

current time. Exchanges under the AWTP will be “bucket-for-bucket”. There will be no significant impacts to participating districts and their respective Friant Division or CV CVP water supplies.

Due to variations in weather and hydrological conditions, agricultural water needs are time sensitive, and usually arise on short-notice, and don’t necessarily coincide with available wet year surface water. The Proposed Action will allow Friant Division and CV CVP contractors to continue efficiently shifting CVP water supplies from areas of low demand (at the time of approval) to areas of greater demand. The Proposed Action will help alleviate the need of some landowners to pump groundwater since surface water supplies will be more available to districts in need of supplemental supplies. As a result, there will be beneficial impacts to groundwater resources.

The AWTP requires that the CVP contractor provide Reclamation with advance notice of any proposed transfer and/or exchange so that Reclamation can determine if the action is consistent with the Proposed Action description and coordinate with the Friant Water Authority to make sure that excess capacity exists within Friant Division facilities. In addition, coordination will ensure that Reclamation’s obligations to deliver water to other CVP contractors, wildlife refuges, and other requirements will not be significantly impacted by the Proposed Action. There will be no significant impacts to Friant Division facilities.

Land Use

The Proposed Action will utilize existing facilities to convey waters allowed under the AWTP and will not require construction of new facilities or modifications to existing facilities that will result in ground disturbance. Exchanges will be “bucket for bucket” so participating districts will not experience a net gain or loss in water supply that can impact agricultural production. Transfers will help supplement any shortage of surface water supplies that will be used to irrigate and maintain existing agricultural production. Waters involved with the Proposed Action will be used on existing farmland and will not be used to put new land into production. There will be no significant impacts to land use.

Biological Resources

The Proposed Action will be identical to conditions for biological resources under the No Action Alternative. The Proposed Action will not alter CVP operations, water storage or release patterns from CVP facilities, or the maximum volume of water delivered to the contractors as compared to the No Action Alternative. The transfers and exchanges are water management actions to support existing uses and conditions. No native lands will be cultivated as a result of the Proposed Action. Lands fallowed for three or more years will require surveys for wildlife species including threatened and endangered species prior to application of this water. Therefore, the Proposed Action will have no significant impacts on federally listed species, critical habitat, or candidate species.

Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action involves the transfer and/or exchange of water through existing facilities, which will not result in modifications, new construction, or changes in land use. Because the Proposed Action will result in no physical alterations of existing facilities and no ground

disturbance, Reclamation maintains the conclusion that the Proposed Action has no potential to cause effect to historic properties pursuant to the regulations at 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1), and no additional consideration under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is required.

Indian Trust Assets (ITA)

Approval of the AWTP will not involve any construction on lands or impact water, hunting, and fishing rights associated with the nearest ITA listed in the affected environment. Therefore, the Proposed Action does not have a potential to impact ITA.

Global Climate

Greenhouse gases (GHG) generated by the Proposed Action is expected to be extremely small compared to sources contributing to potential climate change since the exchange of water will be conveyed mostly via gravity and little, if any, additional pumping from electric motors will be required. 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 to no increases in GHG emissions and a net increase in GHG emissions among the pool of GHG will not be detectable. There will be no significant impacts on the global climate.

It is possible that climate change could affect the Proposed Action rather than vice versa; however, it would be difficult measure/define the impact(s), if any. Operations of the CVP are flexible to coincide with hydrologic conditions. Therefore, effects related to changes in the global climate will not result in significant impacts to the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Impacts

Impacts analyzed in Section 3 of the SEA and EA-10-052 are considered part of the cumulative impacts analysis since the AWTP itself is a program which streamlines the acknowledgement process for several transfer and/or exchange actions.

The Proposed Action, when taken into consideration similar past, existing, and reasonably foreseeable actions will have beneficial impacts to groundwater resources since landowners will not have to rely on groundwater pumping to irrigate their crops. There will be no significant cumulative impacts to Friant Division facilities since coordination with Reclamation and the Friant Water Authority is required to make sure that excess capacity exists within Friant Division facilities. In addition, coordination will ensure that Reclamation's obligations to deliver water to other CVP contractors, wildlife refuges, and other requirements will not be significantly impacted or indirectly impact third parties. The increase in cap total for the AWTP will not increase or decrease the amount of CVP water each district receives under contract with Reclamation. Transfers and/or exchanges will be between willing participants. The Proposed Action will not contribute to significant cumulative impacts to water resources.

The Proposed Action is found to not have any additional impacts on land use, biological resources, global climate, and ITA from what was already analyzed in EA-10-052; therefore, will not contribute to significant cumulative impacts to these resources when taken into consideration other similar past, existing, and reasonably foreseeable actions.