

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
FINAL

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

LONG-TERM CONTRACT RENEWAL FOR  
CITY OF FRESNO

FONSI No. 00-124

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## BACKGROUND

In accordance with Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Region of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has found an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the proposed execution of the Long-Term Water Service Contract for the City of Lindsay, of the Central Valley Project (CVP). This Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's *Friant Division Long-Term Contract Renewal Environmental Assessment (EA)*, dated January 2001 and the *Supplemental Environmental Assessment for the City of Fresno, 40-Year Long-Term Contract Renewal*, dated March 2004, herein incorporated by reference.

Section 3409 of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act of 1992 (CVPIA) stipulates that Reclamation must prepare and complete a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), pursuant to NEPA, analyzing the direct and indirect impacts and benefits associated with the implementation of the CVPIA. This was completed with the Record of Decision signed on January 9, 2001.

In accordance with Section 3404(c) of the CVPIA, authorization of long-term contract renewals (LTCRs) also requires appropriate environmental review. This was the subject of the Friant Division Long-Term Contract Renewal EA (Friant EA), which tiered from the CVPIA PEIS. The PEIS addressed the impacts and benefits of implementing the CVPIA provisions CVP-wide and allowed subsequent environmental documents to tier from and to incorporate the PEIS analysis. The Friant EA analyzed localized impacts of continued water deliveries of 60,000 acre feet per year (af/y) of Class 1 Friant CVP water to City of Fresno, resulting from the 25-year long-term contract. The Friant EA assumed the 25-year period would begin in 2001 and end in 2026. However, the City of Fresno's current long-term contract (No. 14-06-200-8901) does not expire until 2006. The CVPIA provided incentives for contractors to renew their contract early. Therefore it is anticipated the City of Fresno would sign their new long-term contract in 2005. Under the provisions in Public Law 88-44, (RRA); Section 9(c) of the Reclamation Project Act of 1939; Reclamation Project Act of 1956; Reclamation Project Act of 1963; and CVPIA, The City of Fresno is a Municipal and Industrial and Reclamation is offering a 40-year contract. Therefore, Reclamation prepared a Supplemental EA (SEA) in March 2004 to analyze the impacts to environmental resources for the continued water deliveries from 2005 to 2046.

The purpose of the proposed action is to execute the Long-Term Water Service Contract with City of Fresno for 40 years. The approval and long-term contract would be consistent with the provisions in the CVPIA, Reclamation Project Act, and Reclamation Reform Act (RRA). This Proposed Action is necessary to provide uninterrupted CVP water deliveries to the City of Fresno for municipal and industrial purposes for 40 years.

Three alternatives were identified in the Friant EA for the renewal of the long-term contract between Reclamation and the Friant Division Contractors. The alternatives represented a range of water service agreements provisions that could be implemented for

the long-term contract renewals. The No-Action Alternative consists of renewing the existing water service contract as described by the Preferred Alternative of the PEIS. In November 1999, Reclamation published a proposed long-term water service contract. In April 2000, the CVP Contractors presented an alternative long-term service contract. Reclamation and CVP Contractors continued to negotiate the CVP-wide terms and conditions with these proposals serving as the “bookends”. The final contract language and the long-term renewal Proposed Action represents a negotiated position between Alternatives 1 and 2. The analysis of the final contract language was included in the Final Friant EA, completed in January 2001.

The Friant EA and the scope of the analysis were developed consistent with regulations and Council of Environmental Quality. The analysis in the EA finds that the renewal of the contract is, in essence, a continuation of the “status quo”. Although there are financial and administrative changes to the contracts, they perpetuate the existing use and allocation of resources (i.e. the same amount of water is being provided to the same lands for existing/ongoing purposes). The analysis in the EA and SEA, therefore, addresses the proposed changes to the contract and the potential environmental effects of those changes. As indicated in the incorporated by referenced Friant EA, SEA, and in this FONSI, Reclamation has found that these contract changes would not result in significant impacts on the environment.

## **FINDINGS**

In accordance with NEPA and its implementing regulations and consistent with the analysis in the Friant EA, the Mid-Pacific Region of Reclamation has found that the Proposed Action to renew a long-term contract for water service for City of Fresno is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Consequently, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is supported by the following factors:

1. Surface Water Resources – Under the proposed action, CVP operations and use amounts would remain the same as existing conditions. The Proposed Action would have no effect on total water supply. No additional water supplies would be delivered and uses would be consistent. Therefore, no significant impacts would occur to surface water resources as a result of this action.
2. Groundwater Resources – The City of Fresno would continue managing available surface water and groundwater as in the past. During dry periods, more groundwater is likely to be pumped when economically beneficial or when surface water is limited. Providing surface water supplies to the City of Fresno would continue the recharging of water to the aquifer over the next 40 years and maintaining the local groundwater resources. No significant changes to, or impacts to groundwater would occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

3. Water Quality - The proposed long-term contract renewal would not change surface or groundwater quality from existing conditions. The water delivered under this proposed action is small and is of high enough quality to not lead to any discernable changes in surface or groundwater quality.

4. Fisheries – The Proposed Action is expected to continue existing operations and deliveries of this water. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no impacts on fishery resources.

Land Use Resources – The Proposed Action would not result in growth-inducing impacts because there would be no changes to CVP operations or contract amounts beyond the 60,000 af/y of water. The Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts or changes to land use.

5. Biological Resources – The Proposed Action, relative to the No Action Alternative, does not increase the water service contract amounts, require additional facilities (dams, canals, etc.), or convert natural habitat to farmland, homes or businesses. Consequently, the continued historic operations under the Proposed Action would not result in any changes to the area's biological resources.

6. Threatened and Endangered Species - Consultation pursuant to the Endangered Species Act has been completed for the Proposed Action. Based on these completed consultations the Proposed Action will have no significant effect on listed species.

7. Recreational Resources – Recreational opportunities would remain unchanged. CVP facilities and operations would not change as a result of the renewal of the long-term contract. The Proposed Action would have no impacts to recreation in the region.

8. Socioeconomic Resources – The Proposed Action would have a less than significant effect on socio-economical resources. Due to the higher reliability of M&I CVP water, the long-term contract renewal would not result in large variations in water deliveries or significant changes in gross revenue, net revenue, and employment in the region.

9. Cultural Resources – The Proposed Action will not result in impacts to eligible or significant cultural resources because no additional infrastructure would be constructed and no land use changes or conversions into farmland or other uses are proposed. In addition, there would be no increase in deliveries, land use changes, or conversion of existing natural habitat into farmland or other uses.

10. Social Conditions – The Proposed Action does not change the CVP management, facilities operation, or result in any new construction of additional facilities. Independent of the Proposed Action, present high unemployment rates would continue for the area. Agriculture would remain a large employer in the San Joaquin Valley and in City of Fresno. The continued deliveries of this water (60,000 af/y) for

M&I users would not result in significant changes to social conditions or unemployment rates.

11. Air Quality – The Proposed Action would not change existing CVP facilities, operations, or result in construction of new facilities to deliver this water. No increase to the contract supply would occur under the Proposed Action. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not promote growth and would have no significant impacts on air quality.

12. Geology and Soils – The Proposed Action relative to the No Action Alternative would continue CVP water deliveries to Fresno with no change in the contract amount. There would be no new construction of facilities and operations which would affect soil erosion. CVP operations and flows would continue to be conducted to prevent scouring and bank erosion. The Proposed Action would have no identifiable impacts upon geology or soils.

13. Visual Resources – The Proposed Action would not result in construction of new facilities or land disturbing activities that could alter the visual environment. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not have a significant effect on the service area's unique or scenic landscape features.

14. Environmental Justice – The Proposed Action would not have a disproportionately high adverse effect on any one ethnic group compared to another, including land owners, farmers, and farm workers. However, any change would reflect more on individuals and skill levels who are generally economically disadvantaged. The Proposed Action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations.

15. Indian Trust Assets – The Proposed Action relative to the No Action Alternative would continue CVP water deliveries with no change to the contract amount. There is no change in CVP management, reservoir operations, or facilities that would interfere with existing Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) water rights or diversions.