

FONSI

United States Department of the Interior

**Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Sacramento, California**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**THE TEMPORARY ACQUISITION OF WATER
FROM SEMITROPIC WATER STORAGE DISTRICT FOR KERN NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE FOR WATER SUPPLY YEARS: 2000 - 2003**

Recommended by:

Water Acquisition Program Manager

Concur:

Regional Environmental Officer

Approved by:

Regional Resources Manager, Sacramento

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The Temporary Acquisition of Water from Semitropic Water Storage District for Kern National Wildlife Refuge for Water Supply Years: 2000 - 2003

There is a need to purchase water during 2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2002/2003, and 2003/2004 water supply years to meet Kern National Wildlife Refuge (KNWR) Level 4 requirements to provide critical wetland habitats for the benefit of migratory waterfowl, other migratory birds, and wetland-dependent wildlife. Pursuant to Section 3406(d)(2) of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) must provide 80 percent of the full Level 4 water requirements in 2000/2001, 90 percent of the full Level 4 water requirements in 2001/2002, and 100 percent of the Level 4 water requirements in 2002/2003 and 2003/2004.

The Proposed Action is for the Department of Interior (Interior) to purchase up to 17,500 acre-feet of water from Semitropic Water Storage District (SWSD) to meet KNWR Level 4 water supply requirements for the water service years (2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2002/2003, and 2003/2004). The Proposed Action to purchase up to 17,500 acre-feet of water per water year would provide up to 15,050 acre-feet to KNWR after conveyance losses (which are assumed to be 14 percent of the purchased amount). Three options exist for the source of the water supply being offered by SWSD.

SWSD may purchase surplus water from the Kern County Water Agency (KCWA) pooled water supply, if available, during the 2000/2001 water year. The pooled water supply consists of State Water Project (SWP) water. KCWA, as a state water contractor, can provide SWP water to SWSD and KNWR since they are within the Agency's service area and the SWP place of use. The KNWR is predominantly located within the SWSD district boundaries and can accept water from the SWSD. The acquired water would be conveyed to KNWR through canals owned and operated by Buena Vista Water Storage District (BVWSD) from the California Aqueduct. Delivery through the BVWSD is the most direct route to the KNWR thus minimizing conveyance losses.

A second source of water is the SWP interruptible supplies. Interruptible supplies is water that is in excess of what is needed to meet SWP contractors annual entitlement deliveries. These supplies may be delivered for use within the service area of the requesting contractor, for the same reasonable and beneficial uses as entitlement water. On that basis, SWSD as a KCWA member entity, has access to the SWP interruptible supplies which can be made available for delivery to KNWR as incremental Level 4 water supply. The interruptible nature of the water source means that the timing and duration of its availability are uncertain. Historically, this water supply has been available when San Luis Reservoir is full or filling is imminent. The interruptible water supply, if available, could be acquired in the event that the excess pooled water is not available.

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A possible third source of water is the Kern County Water Bank Authority, of which SWSD is a member district. SWSD water would be made available for purchase by exchanging a portion of their SWP water allocation for the SWP water stored in the Kern County Water Bank. The acquired water would then be made available for delivery to the KNWR from the California Aqueduct through the BVWSD canals.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared that evaluates the potential environmental impacts, both beneficial and adverse, associated with the Proposed Action and a No-Action Alternative. The Final EA is attached for reference. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, Reclamation has determined that the purchase of water from SWSD for use at KNWR would not result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based upon the following:

- Water purchased from SWSD is considered to be temporarily in excess by SWSD due to adequate water supplies from storage and hydrologic conditions. The water, if not purchased, would have been exported for delivery to other willing buyers or placed in storage under the No-Action Alternative. No changes to Delta pumping operations would occur with implementation of the Proposed Action.
- Total return flows and the water quality of the return flows in SWSD and KNWR would not be substantially altered by the Proposed Action.
- Land uses would not change in SWSD or KNWR under the Proposed Action.
- Habitat values at KNWR will improve through the use of the acquired water under the Proposed Action by extending flooding periods. However, no new lands will be irrigated with the acquired water thus avoiding any significant adverse impacts to special-status or listed species.
- Recreational opportunities at KNWR would improve due to the increased water supply. Recreational opportunities in the Delta, streams, or reservoirs would not be affected under the Proposed Action.
- The amount of energy used would not be substantially affected by the Proposed Action.
- Cultural resources would not be affected due to the Proposed Action because no land use changes or new construction would occur.

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- Indian Trust Assets will not be adversely affected by the Proposed Action because none occur within the SWSD or KNWR.
- Minority or disadvantaged populations or communities will not be adversely impacted by the Proposed Action.
- The Proposed Action would not contribute to a cumulatively significant adverse impact when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions given the relatively small amount of water involved, and the short-term and temporary nature of the water acquisition.