



Friant-Kern Canal

Overview

As part of the Central Valley Project, the 152-mile Friant-Kern Canal delivers water to one million acres of some of the most productive farmland in the country and provides drinking water to thousands of San Joaquin Valley residents. The canal begins at Friant Dam and conveys water from Millerton Lake, a reservoir on the San Joaquin River, south to its terminus at the Kern River in Bakersfield. Friant-Kern Canal was designed as a gravity-fed facility and does not rely on pumps to move water.



The Friant-Kern Canal near Fresno.

Subsidence and Canal Operations

Completed in 1951, Friant-Kern Canal was constructed to have a capacity of 5,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) that gradually decreases to 2,000 cfs at its terminus. The canal is built in both concrete-lined and unlined earth sections. Subsidence in the area, caused by pumping excess groundwater faster than it can be recharged, has caused parts of the canal to subside (or sink). This negatively affects the canal's ability to convey water, reducing the canal's capacity. When the land elevation lowers, the canal must be operated at a reduced flow to ensure that water does not overflow banks thereby restricting the ability to make full water deliveries.

The diminished capacity in the canal has resulted in up to 300,000 acre-feet of reduced water deliveries in certain water years with effects most prominent in the middle reach of the canal (milepost 88 to milepost 121).

Middle Reach Capacity Correction

To address the canal's capacity loss, Reclamation and the Friant Water Authority completed a feasibility study and environmental review in 2020. The Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project will restore capacity in the 33-mile section of the middle reach where it is most restricted. When complete, the project will return the canal's conveyance capacity from the current 1,600 cfs to the original 4,000 cfs. Construction on the \$500 million project is expected to begin in the winter of 2021 with Phase 1 of the project complete in 2024.



More information on the project can be found here: www.usbr.gov/mp/fkc-fr.html