

**DRAFT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

FOR THE

**Madera Irrigation District Transfer, Banking and Exchange of Friant CVP
Water to Westlands Water District (Up to 25,000 Acre Feet)**

California

Recommended: _____ Date: _____
Environmental Specialist

Recommended: _____ Date: _____
Program Manager

Approved: _____ Date: _____
Regional Resources Manager

FONSI No. _____



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid Pacific Region
Sacramento, California

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**Madera Irrigation District Transfer, Banking and Exchange of
Friant CVP Water to Westlands Water District**

California

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has found that an environmental impact statement is not required for the approval of the transfer, banking and exchange of Madera Irrigation District's (MID) water year 2006 Friant Central Valley Project (CVP) water to the Westlands Water District (WWD). The Environmental Assessment (EA) for this transfer, banking and exchange approval is incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and supports this FONSI.

The proposed action is Reclamation's approval of the transfer of up to 25,000 AF of MID's Friant CVP water to WWD. The proposed action also includes Reclamation's approval of the banking of this transfer water in North Kern Water Storage District (NKWSD) (up to 10,000 AF) and in Semitropic Water Storage District (Semitropic) (up to 15,000 AF). The banked water would eventually be returned to WWD via exchanges facilitated by Kern County Water Agency. Approval of these actions allows MID to maximize the beneficial use of the 2006 Friant allocations and provides WWD a more reliable source of water to help reduce the impacts of future water supply shortages. WWD anticipates future water supply shortages, and desires to obtain additional water supplies from MID for storage, exchange, and delivery back to WWD. Reclamation has a need to approve proposed water transfers and water banking outside a CVP contractor's service area based on contractual requirements and in compliance with State and Federal law. These actions maximize the beneficial use of Friant Division CVP supplies, improve the water supply reliability for WWD, and reduce WWD's dependence on local groundwater resources during water supply shortages.

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 factors:

1. The Proposed Action is subject to the following conditions:
 - a. The water to be transferred and exchanged would only be used to maintain existing conditions, within the boundaries of WWD as described;
 - b. The water would only be used for beneficial purposes and in accordance with Federal Reclamation law and guidelines;
 - c. The water would not be used to place untilled or new lands into production, nor to convert undeveloped land to other uses;
 - d. The Proposed Action would not affect CVP or State Water Project (SWP) operations; all supplies would be previously scheduled for

delivery points south of the delta, and do not require additional delta exports;

- e. The conveyance, deposit and storage of the transfer water into the NKWSD bank and into the Semitropic bank would not require the construction of any new water diversion, spreading or conveyance facilities.

2. Surface water - The proposed action is a one-time transfer involving a small amount of water when compared to the overall water supplies for MID, NKWSD, Semitropic, KCWA, and WWD. Overall water supplies would not increase or decrease. Overall surface water quality and quantities would not change. The Proposed Action would result in no major changes to SWP and CVP facilities operations and would not affect surface water resources.

3. Ground water - The delivery of up to 25,000AF of Friant Unit CVP water to NKWSD and Semitropic for groundwater recharge and future exchange will help protect the local aquifer from overdraft in the interim period. NKWSD and Semitropic would have the benefit of the use of this water temporarily. Groundwater resources in NKWSD and Semitropic would improve slightly in the short-term. The Proposed Action would provide water to WWD, and therefore reduce the need to pump groundwater in order to supplement potential shortages during the time the return water is delivered. With the availability of 25,000AF of additional irrigation water, the Proposed Action would decrease reliance on groundwater pumping by landowners in WWD when the water is returned. This decrease would result in a benefit to groundwater under WWD.

4. Land use - The proposed action would not change land use conditions from existing conditions. All water would move through existing facilities and be placed on established agricultural lands. None of the Friant CVP water would be used to place any untilled or new lands into production, or to convert undeveloped land to other uses. WWD would not promote additional land to be farmed. Any water that is delivered to lands to WWD as a result of this project would be used on established agricultural lands to help offset the dry year water supply shortages faced by Semitropic and hence, reduce the annual amount of groundwater pumped or reduce annual transfers from other sources.

5. Biological Resources - Demands have been met and conditions in MID that support biological resources would not change. No natural waterways containing sensitive fishes will be affected. Reclamation has determined the Proposed Action would have no effect on federally proposed or listed threatened and endangered species or their proposed or designated critical habitat. No further consultation is required under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. This determination is based on the fact that the Proposed Action involves water already allocated and available to MID and all water demands in MID have been met. Habitat types and conditions that support biological resources in MID would not change. The Proposed Action would support existing land uses and

conditions. No native lands or lands fallowed and untilled for three years or more would be converted or cultivated with CVP water. This water would support existing agricultural lands in NKWSD and WWD.

5. Based in the information presented in the environmental assessment, there would be no impact to cultural resources.

6. The environmental assessment indicates that there are no Indian Trust Assets in MID, NKWSD, Semitropic, KCWA or WWD; therefore, the proposed action would not affect any Indian Trust Assets.

7. Socioeconomic Resources - The Proposed Action would continue to support the economic vitality in the region. MID, NKWSD, and WWD are responsible for managing water for the benefit of agriculture, since they exist to support growers within their respective districts. Maximizing the use of water service actions is beneficial to local economic conditions and agricultural employment.

8. The proposed action would not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities because there would be no change in land management and there would not be significant adverse human health or environmental effects.