RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

Approval of Warren Act Contract and Renewal of Right of Way License for San Luis Water District

FONSI-11-003

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Introduction

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to issue a five-year Warren Act contract that would allow San Luis Water District (SLWD) to convey groundwater in the San Luis Canal (SLC) from July 2012 through February 28, 2017. Additionally, Reclamation proposes to issue a 25-year license to use, operate and maintain an existing pipeline over the SLC right of way at milepost 79.67R.

Background

California has experienced severe droughts in recent years that have reduced water supplies to many Central Valley Project (CVP) water service contractors, including SLWD. SLWD experienced reduced water supply allocations in 2007, 2008, and 2009 due to hydrologic conditions and/or regulatory constraints. Though 2010 and 2011 had above normal rainfall, the District received only 45 percent of their full CVP contract supply in 2010 and 80% in 2011. The hydrologic conditions for 2012 have been below normal and SLWD is forecast to receive 40 percent of its CVP allocation. Supplemental water is needed to irrigate permanent crops in the district. The hydrologic conditions for 2013-2017 are highly uncertain; SLWD may need additional supplies in those years if conditions are below normal.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to issue a five-year Warren Act contract to SLWD for conveyance of up to 1,500 af/year of groundwater in the SLC. The term for pumping and conveyance would be July 2012 through February 28, 2017.

To facilitate the pump-in, Reclamation proposes to issue License No. 12-LC-20-0162, which would grant SLWD authority to use, operate and maintain the existing pipeline over Reclamation's SLC right of way at Mile Post 79.67R, for a period of 25 years.

Source of Non-CVP Water

The source of the non-CVP water would be from a single existing well in SLWD. Groundwater would be pumped directly into the SLC from this well (coordinates 36° 59′ 51.46″ N, 120° 54′ 7.25″ W) via the existing pipeline and pump-in point.

The amount of water pumped into the SLC would be measured with a flow-meter located near the discharge point. The meter would be calibrated and read by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). SLWD intends to pump up to 1,500 af/year of groundwater into the SLC each year, and would then take out a like amount, minus losses, from its existing turnouts for agricultural use within SLWD's boundaries. Actual amounts of pump-in would be subject to available

capacity, and driven by water allocations and availability of other supplemental supplies.

Environmental Commitments/Requirements for the Proposed Action

SLWD would be required to confirm that the proposed pumping of groundwater would be compatible with local groundwater management plans. SLWD would be limited to pumping a quantity below the "safe yield" as established in their groundwater management plan, in order to prevent groundwater overdraft and avoid adverse impacts.

SLWD would be required to comply with all provisions of Reclamation's water quality and monitoring requirements in effect at the time of pump-in.

The water would be used for irrigation purposes on established lands. There would be no new construction or excavation occurring as part of the Proposed Action. Any associated ground disturbing activities would require separate NEPA analysis. Pumping and conveyance would occur within existing wells, meters, and pipes across SLC right of way, and existing water diversion and field delivery facilities.

No native or untilled land (fallow for three years or more) may be cultivated with the water involved in these actions.

Findings

In accordance with section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, Reclamation's South-Central California Area Office has determined that approval of the Proposed Action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Draft Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Draft Environmental Assessment Number EA-11-003, *Approval of Warren Act Contract and Renewal of Right of Way License for San Luis Water District*, which is incorporated by reference.

Water Resources

Surface Water No new facilities would be constructed as a result of the Proposed Action. There would be no construction or modification to the SLC and the capacity of the facility would remain the same. The Proposed Action would use only excess capacity for conveyance in the SLC. The Proposed Action would not interfere with the normal operations of the SLC nor would it impede any State Water Project or CVP obligations to deliver water to other contractors or to local fish and wildlife habitat. Furthermore, the Proposed Action would not interfere with the quantity or timing of diversions from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay

Delta. CVP operations and facilities would not vary considerably under either alternative.

Groundwater The total quantity of groundwater that can be pumped into the SLC under the Proposed Action would be limited to 1,500 af/year. Additionally, SLWD would be limited to pumping a quantity below the "safe yield" as established in their groundwater management plan, in order to prevent groundwater overdraft and avoid adverse impacts. Safe yield is defined as the amount of groundwater that can be continuously withdrawn from a basin without adverse impact. The amount of water pumped into the SLC, minus losses, would be credited to SLWD, and that quantity of groundwater pumped into the SLC would then be delivered back into SLWD and used for irrigation purposes. Though some of the water used for irrigation would be used by plants or evaporate, some would also seep back into the ground.

Additionally, the pump-in water must meet water quality standards prior to approval for conveyance, and the monitoring of groundwater quality would continue for the duration of the contract. If the well does not meet the water quality standards, SLWD could not pump water from that well into the SLC under the Warren Act contract. The Warren Act contract provides for routine testing of the well by Reclamation to confirm that the groundwater still meets standards. The contract also allows the Contracting Officer to stop the well if it fails to meet standards. Reclamation and DWR staff would monitor water quality in the canal to identify degradation caused by the groundwater, and would work with SLWD to modify or restrict pumping to improve water quality.

Cumulative Impacts Because the Proposed Action would not involve construction or modification, nor interfere with operations, there would be no cumulative impacts to existing facilities or other contractors. Because pumping would be restricted to below the safe yield, there would not be cumulative impacts to groundwater. Because groundwater quality would be monitored throughout the year, there would be no cumulative impacts to water quality involving water delivered through the SLC.

These findings indicate that there would be no adverse impact to water resources resulting from the Proposed Action.

Geologic Resources

Under the Proposed Action, up to 1,500 af/year of groundwater could be pumped into the SLC. Subsidence would be avoided by limiting pumping to a quantity below the "safe yield" as established in SLWD’s groundwater management plan, and by following the Reclamation’s water quality and monitoring requirements in effect at the time of pump-in. These measures would ensure that overdraft and resulting subsidence does not occur from the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Impacts Cumulative impacts resulting in overdraft and/or subsidence would be avoided by implementation of the measures outlined for the Proposed Action.

These findings indicate that there would be no adverse impact to geologic resources as a result of the Proposed Action.

Land Use

The Proposed Action would utilize CVP water to allow district agricultural lands to remain in production, and to convey non-CVP water to other receiving areas to support existing farmlands and minimize the potential for fallowing agricultural land. No new lands would be cultivated with this water. The conveyance of the non-CVP water through CVP facilities would not contribute to changes in land use. The Proposed Action would not increase or decrease long-term water supplies that would result in additional homes to be constructed and served.

Cumulative Impacts Because the Proposed Action would not involve construction or other land disturbance, and because the Proposed Action supports current land use, there would be no cumulative adverse impacts to land use.

These findings indicate that there would be no adverse impact to land use as a result of the Proposed Action.

Air Quality

The Proposed Action would allow non-CVP water to be conveyed and stored in CVP facilities. This would allow non-CVP water to be delivered to areas in SLWD to supplement diminished CVP water supplies. No new facilities would be needed as a result of the Proposed Action.

Air quality emissions for the Proposed Action are well below the *de minimis* thresholds for the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin and meet San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District standards; therefore, there would be no air quality impacts associated with this Proposed Action.

Cumulative Impacts All emissions result in a cumulative increase in pollutants within the air basin; however emissions from the Proposed Action are well below the *de minimis* standards.

These findings indicate that there would be no significant adverse impact to air quality as a result of the Proposed Action.

Global Climate

The Proposed Action would result in the direct emissions of greenhouse gases through the use of diesel fuel. Based on manufacturer's fuel consumption information, EPA carbon dioxide emissions rates, and the well's operational information, the maximum amount of carbon dioxide that would be generated as a result of the Proposed Action would be approximately 657 metric tons per year. These emissions would not continue past the Proposed Action completion date.

The total emissions are far below the 25,000 metric tons per year threshold for reportable greenhouse gas emissions. As such, the Proposed Action would not result in a substantial change in greenhouse gases emissions, and there would be no significant adverse effect.

Cumulative Impacts Cumulative impacts from greenhouse gas emissions generated by the Proposed Action are expected to be extremely small compared to the background emissions in the area. The total emissions are well below any established threshold. While any increase in greenhouse gases emissions would add to the global inventory of gases that would contribute to global climate change, the Proposed Action would not result in a substantial increase in local or global greenhouse gas emissions.

CVP water allocations are made dependent on hydrologic conditions and environmental requirements. Since Reclamation operations and allocations are flexible, any changes in hydrologic conditions due to global climate change would be addressed within Reclamation's operation flexibility and therefore water resource changes due to climate change would be the same with or without the Proposed Action.

These findings indicate that there would be no significant adverse impact to global climate as a result of the Proposed Action.

Biological Resources

There would be no impacts to biological resources as a result of the Proposed Action. Most of the habitat types required by species protected by the Endangered Species Act do not occur in the Proposed Action area. The Proposed Action would not involve the conversion of any land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. The Proposed Action also would not change the land use patterns of the cultivated or fallowed fields that do have some value to listed species or birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Due to the fact that the Warren Act Contract related water would not reach streams containing listed fish species, there would be no effects to these species. No critical habitat occurs within the area affected by the Proposed Action and so none of the primary constituent elements of any critical habitat would be affected.

There would be no new pumps or construction under the Proposed Action. There would be no effects to the giant garter snake due to groundwater overdraft, under this short term action, because groundwater would remain within the district.

The short duration of the water availability, the requirement that no native lands be converted without consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the stringent requirements for water quality would preclude any impacts to wildlife, whether federally listed or not.

Cumulative Impacts As the Proposed Action is not expected to result in any direct or indirect impacts to biological resources, there would be no cumulative impacts.

These findings indicate that there would be no adverse impact to biological resources as a result of the Proposed Action.

Environmental Justice

A Warren Act contract would allow SLWD to use non-CVP water for irrigation in their service area. The availability of this water could help maintain District-wide agricultural production and farm worker employment.

Cumulative Impacts While the Proposed Action may benefit minority and low-income populations during the life of the contract, the action has a relatively short duration. There would be neither beneficial nor adverse cumulative impacts to minority and low-income populations as a result of the Proposed Action.

These findings indicate that there would be a potential benefit but no adverse impacts to minority and low-income populations as a result of the Proposed Action.

Socioeconomic Resources

Under the Proposed Action, SLWD could convey and store non-CVP water in CVP facilities to supplement their water supply. A Warren Act contract would allow the non-CVP water to be distributed to sustain permanent crops. This would help maintain the agricultural economy of the area. Therefore, implementing the Proposed Action may provide a benefit to socioeconomic resources in the area.

Cumulative Impacts The Proposed Action may result in a stronger local agricultural economy during the program timeframe. Since water supply availability may allow permanent crops to be sustained during dry years, there may be beneficial cumulative impacts to socioeconomic resources as a result of the Proposed Action.

These findings indicate that there would be a potential benefit but no adverse impacts to socioeconomic resources as a result of the Proposed Action.