

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

Contra Costa Water District Transfer with Alameda County Water District

FONSI-14-028

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Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for a proposed transfer/exchange of 5,000 acre-feet (AF) of water. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) 14-028, *Contra Costa Water District Exchange and/or Transfer to Alameda County Water District*, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

Alameda County Water District (ACWD) is a State Water Project (SWP) contractor located in southern Alameda County. Normally, ACWD receives about 40% of its water supply from the SWP via the South Bay Aqueduct. Due to extraordinarily dry hydrologic conditions, ACWD's SWP initial 2014 allocation was set to zero, later raised to 5% in April. In addition, due to the lack of rainfall, ACWD's local groundwater levels are at critically low levels, and the groundwater basin is at risk of overdraft and seawater intrusion.

Los Vaqueros Reservoir is located within Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) and stores water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Delta), under Reclamation's Central Valley Project (CVP) water rights (redirection of CVP storage releases) and CCWD's Los Vaqueros water right. Los Vaqueros currently holds approximately 31,000 AF of water diverted under CCWD's water right. In 2013, CCWD and ACWD entered an agreement under which ACWD purchased the right to use 5,000 AF of this stored water.

In order to manage the impact of ongoing shortages, ACWD has asked its customers to cut back on water use by 20%. On March 13, 2014, the ACWD Board declared a water shortage emergency, coupled with water use restrictions. In addition to water demand management measures, ACWD would also like to make use of 5,000 AF of CVP water previously acquired from CCWD and stored in Los Vaqueros Reservoir, in order to meet current needs.

Since there is no direct conveyance mechanism to deliver water from Los Vaqueros to ACWD's distribution system, ACWD and CCWD have proposed transfer similar to a groundwater substitution, except CCWD will be substituting water stored in Los Vaqueros Reservoir. CCWD would make use of the 5,000 AF of acquired CVP water stored in Los Vaqueros Reservoir, and ACWD would take delivery of an equal volume of CCWD's CVP water from the Delta. Since this transfer would require conveyance of CVP water to a non-CVP contractor, by way of SWP facilities, approval is required from Reclamation.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to authorize the transfer of 5,000 AF of water from CCWD to ACWD. The transfer would be executed as follows:

CCWD would take delivery of 5,000 AF of water currently stored under its water rights in Los Vaqueros Reservoir. The water would be delivered to CCWD's in-district customers for use. In return, ACWD would take delivery of 5,000 AF of CCWD's CVP water from the Delta.

CCWD's normal points of diversion for its CVP water are at its Old River Intake and Middle River Intake at Victoria Canal. Under the Proposed Action, the water would instead be diverted at the SWP's Clifton Court Forebay, and conveyed to ACWD by way of the South Bay Aqueduct. This requires a temporary change in the point of diversion/redirection for CVP water. Reclamation would therefore need to submit a State Water Resources Control Board petition for a temporary change in point of diversion/redirection for the temporary water transfer from CCWD to ACWD.

The proposed transfer would occur in 2014 and could take anywhere from fifteen days to three months to complete. The timing and rate of the water transfer would be determined in close coordination among ACWD, CCWD, Reclamation and the Department of Water Resources (DWR). No construction or modification of state or federal facilities would be required.

Environmental Commitments

The proponent shall implement the following environmental protection measures to reduce environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action (Table 1). Environmental consequences described in this document assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

Table 1 Environmental Protection Measures and Commitments

Resource	Protection Measure
Water Resources	A refill agreement between CCWD, Reclamation and DWR is required before water may be taken from Los Vaqueros Reservoir for the purpose of this transfer.

Findings

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 findings.

Resources Eliminated From Consideration

Reclamation determined that the Proposed Action has no potential to impact Cultural Resources, Indian Sacred Sites, Indian Trust Assets, Land Use, Socioeconomic Resources, Environmental Justice, Air Quality or Global Climate. Therefore these resources were not evaluated further.

Water Resources

Under the Proposed Action, ACWD would take delivery of 5,000 AF of CCWD's CVP supply and water stored in Los Vaqueros Reservoir would be used by CCWD for in-district needs under its CVP allocation. Since this action may lower the water level in the reservoir, which is an operational concern for other legal users of Delta water, CCWD would be required to keep track of the vacated storage amount in Los Vaqueros resulting from this transfer, and refill that storage space. This would be arranged with the approval of Reclamation and DWR either under: 1) its Los Vaqueros water rights, or 2) with its CVP Contract supply during Delta excess conditions.

This refill would be evaluated as a separate action, and would be executed in coordination with DWR and Reclamation.

In exchange for the water stored in Los Vaqueros Reservoir, CCWD would then reduce its CVP diversions from the Delta by an amount (rate) equivalent to the delivery to ACWD. CCWD's normal points of diversion for this CVP water are at its Rock Slough Intake, Old River Intake and Middle River Intake at Victoria Canal. Under the Proposed Action, a portion of the water which would normally have been diverted at the Old River or Middle River Intakes would instead be diverted at the SWP's Clifton Court Forebay, and conveyed to ACWD by way of the State's South Bay Aqueduct. When the SWP takes this transferred water into Clifton Court Forebay for pumping at the Banks Pumping Plant, the overall pumping from the south Delta would not be increased from what would have occurred absent this transfer. Flows in the Old and Middle Rivers north of CCWD's Old River and Middle River intakes would not change as a result of the Proposed Action.

The place of use for the CVP water would be the ACWD water service area. The ACWD service area is within the federal CVP service area as identified on maps obtained from the State Water Resource Control Board's files, except for a small area in the southeastern part of ACWD. However, this small area is outside the distribution pipelines of ACWD and cannot receive water. Therefore, none of the transfer water would be delivered outside the existing CVP place of use.

No new construction would be necessary to convey the exchanged water. Each district would only deliver water to its existing customers by way of existing facilities.

Biological Resources

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, there would be no new impacts to migratory birds, federally listed species or their critical habitat, or to Essential Fish Habitat, other than the pumping effects that have already been previously addressed (see No Action Alternative section, above). Although Reclamation's Proposed Action is a transfer between two districts, Reclamation is involved because ACWD cannot take direct delivery of the water that they have purchased which is currently stored in Los Vaqueros Reservoir, and an exchange for Delta water is necessary for ACWD to make use of it. Under the Proposed Action, there would be no net change in deliveries of CVP and SWP water, and the water would move only through existing facilities and be put to existing uses (or included lands that have gone through proper environmental review beforehand). Due to the exchange, water that would normally be pumped at the Old and Middle River intakes would instead be pumped at Banks Pumping Plant.