

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Warren Act Contract for Storage and Conveyance of Non-CVP Water from Placer County Water Agency to Westlands Water District in 2014

FONSI 14-15-MP

Recommended:

Douglas Kleinsmith
Douglas Kleinsmith
Natural Resources Specialist
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: July 17, 2014

Concurrence:

Sheryl Looper
Sheryl Looper
CVP Water Transaction Coordinator
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: July 17, 2014

Approved:

Richard Woodley
Richard Woodley
Regional Resources Manager
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: July 17, 2014



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

July 2014

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Reclamation will enter into a one-year Warren Act contract with Westlands Water District (WWD) to facilitate the transfer of up to 35,000 acre-feet (AF) of Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) water to WWD in 2014. The Proposed Action will help alleviate water supply shortages within WWD, which have been exacerbated by dry conditions and low water allocations.

WWD faces deficits in their water supplies in 2014, and similar conditions are envisioned for 2015. The result of this shortfall would be the loss of annual agricultural crops and potential damage to permanent crops. The potential loss of permanent crops such as orchards or vineyards represents a long term disruption to agricultural productivity because such crops require years of investment and planning. This transfer would prevent some of the potential damage from the zero allocation this year.

Reclamation prepared the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the effects of the Proposed Action. The EA was available for public review from July 7, 2014 through July 14, 2014, and no comments were received on the EA.

PROPOSED ACTION

PCWA would implement the transfer by releasing water from its Middle Fork Project (MFP) reservoirs through several tunnels and powerhouses (Middle Fork and Ralston powerhouses) into a re-regulating reservoir and low-head powerhouse (Ralston Afterbay and Oxbow Powerhouse) and into the Middle Fork American River, which subsequently flows into the North Fork American River. From the North Fork American River, the released water would flow into Folsom Reservoir, as shown in Figure 2. The 35,000 AF from the MFP reservoirs will reach Folsom Reservoir by September 30, 2014. Reclamation would release water from Folsom Reservoir into the Lower American River, where it will flow into the Sacramento River, and through the Delta to Jones or Banks Pumping Plant, where the amount transferred is subject to an estimated 30% carriage loss. From Jones Pumping Plant, water would be conveyed through the Delta-Mendota Canal and pumped into O'Neill Forebay where it would be diverted either for immediate WWD use or for storage in the federal share of San Luis Reservoir for later release to the federal side of the San Luis Canal for conveyance to WWD and the Coalinga Canal for use. If the Banks Pumping Plant is used instead of Jones Pumping Plant, water would be conveyed through the California Aqueduct to the O'Neill Forebay where it would be diverted either for immediate WWD use or for storage in the federal share of San Luis Reservoir for later release to the federal side of the San Luis Canal for conveyance to WWD and the Coalinga Canal for use. In addition to the estimated 30% carriage loss through the Delta, the transferred water is subject to 5% conveyance loss for use of the Delta-Mendota and San Luis Canal.

FINDINGS

Based on the attached EA, Reclamation finds that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The attached EA describes the existing environmental resources in the Proposed Action area and evaluates the

effects of the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives on the resources. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46). The analysis provided in the attached EA is incorporated by reference.

Following are the reasons why the impacts of the Proposed Action are not significant:

1. The Proposed Action will not affect air quality or increase greenhouse gas emissions.
2. The Proposed Action will not affect water quality. There will be no decrease in river flows or reservoir storage. Temporary increased storage at Folsom Reservoir and increased flows in the Lower American River and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta would not degrade water quality.
3. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect biological resources. The amount of water being transferred would not increase the magnitude of the velocity and flow above peaking levels in reservoirs above Folsom Lake. Over the proposed transfer period, salmon and steelhead young of the year in the lower American River will be well beyond the life stages susceptible to a stranding event. As such, there would be no impact to fisheries in the event that the 200 cfs transfer releases were ceased. After the completion of the transfer, the cessation of flows will be done according to the 2009 NMFS Biological Opinion which describes ramp down releases for the American River below Nimbus Dam.
4. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect land use or agriculture. The additional water supply will not induce growth or result in existing land uses being converted to new land uses but will reduce the loss of agricultural crops and potential damage to perennial crops in WWD from low water allocations.
5. The Proposed Action will not affect historic properties.
6. The Proposed Action will not affect Indian Trust Assets.
7. The Proposed Action will not affect Indian sacred sites.
8. The Proposed Action will not have any impact on minority or low-income populations.
9. The Proposed Action will not result in adverse cumulative effects.
10. There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial.