

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Draft FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Tulare Irrigation District WaterSMART Funding Grant for Visalia Water Conservation Project and 25-year Exchange with the City of Visalia

FONSI-10-089

Recommended by:

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Date: _____

Concurred by:

See Appendix A
Archaeologist
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Date: Appendix A in EA-10-089

Concurred by:

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Approved by:

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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 (EIS) is not required for Tulare Irrigation District (TID) WaterSMART Funding Grant for Visalia Water Conservation Project and 25-year Exchange with the City of Visalia. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA)-10-089, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

Reclamation proposes to award a WaterSMART grant to TID for purchasing and installation of a reinforced concrete pipe that would carry tertiary treated water from the City of Visalia (City) to TID.

TID has also requested that Reclamation approve a 25-year exchange of tertiary treated water for a portion of TID's Class 1, Class 2, Section 215 or Recovered Water Account water (collectively referred to as "CVP water") between TID and the City as herein further described.

TID and the City have proposed a cooperative and mutually-beneficial project to reduce local and regional water conflicts through conservation of treated wastewater supplies, which also allows for the diversification of TID's and the City's water supplies.

Currently, the City discharges its treated water to an existing creek system; however the City has been ordered to discontinue this practice by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board). The City has proposed upgrading their existing wastewater treatment plant (Water Conservation Plant or WCP) to include a new tertiary treatment process in order to improve the quality of their treated water. The upgrade in the treatment plan is not part of Reclamation's Proposed Action.

PROPOSED ACTION

Reclamation would award a \$696,000 WaterSMART Grant for the construction of the TID Water Conservation and Reuse Pipeline (TID Pipeline), and would approve a 25-year exchange of up to 40,000 acre-feet annually of the City's tertiary treated water for a portion of TID's CVP water.

The TID Pipeline would be an approximately 8,300-foot long, 60-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipeline. A concrete and metal water control structure would divert tertiary treated water from the City's planned Mill Creek Bypass Pipeline into the TID Pipeline. The TID Pipeline would continue south along the alignment of County Road 68 right of way. At its southern end, the TID Pipeline would terminate in an outfall into the existing Evans Ditch. Once in Evans Ditch, the treated water would be delivered to TID's customers or incidentally spilled into Regulation Basin No. 3 or Anderson Basin on occasion when there is no immediate

irrigation demand from TID farmers. Construction would last approximately 4 months and would occur between July 2014 and September 2014.

The CVP water would be diverted to the City from existing turnouts on the Friant-Kern Canal at either the St. Johns River or the Lower Kaweah River. The CVP water would be used by the City for groundwater recharge purposes in existing groundwater recharge basins and channels. In exchange, the City would send TID tertiary treated water via the TID Pipeline. The CVP water exchanged with the City will be on an intermittent basis, and consists primarily of Class 2 and other supplies surplus to the needs of TID as anticipated in wetter hydrologic years.

The pipeline would deliver up to 100 cubic feet per second of tertiary treated water. TID would receive on average approximately 12,000 acre-feet/year of tertiary treated water. Under the exchange arrangement, TID would owe the City one acre-foot (af) of CVP water for every two received from the treatment plant. The source of return water from TID is primarily from the Friant Unit of the CVP and TID's contract for a water supply therefrom. Water returned to the City would be exclusively used for groundwater recharge in channels and facilities deemed advantageous to the City's underlying groundwater supply.

Environmental Commitments

TID will implement the following environmental protection measures to reduce environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action.

Resource	Measure
Air Quality	Implement control measures for construction emissions of particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM ₁₀) according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's (SJVAPCD) Regulation VIII (SJVAPCD 2012b). One measure includes the use of water with all "land clearing, grubbing, scraping, excavation, land leveling, grading, cut and fill, and demolition activities" for fugitive dust suppression.
Biological Resources – Swainson's Hawk	If construction occurs during avian breeding season (February 15 to September 1), preconstruction surveys for nesting Swainson's hawks shall be performed within 0.5 mi of the project area according to established California Department of Fish and Wildlife protocol. In the event that Swainson's hawks are found, the mitigation measure in the Staff Report Regarding Mitigation Impacts for Swainson's Hawks (<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>) in the Central Valley of California shall be implemented during construction.

<p>Biological Resources – San Joaquin Kit Fox (from USFWS letter to the State Water Resources Control Board)</p>	<p>The City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a preconstruction survey no more than 60 days prior to project initiation. If any evidence of site occupation by kit fox is observed, the qualified biologist shall establish a buffer that provides sufficient protection (i.e., avoids dens) and complies with applicable regulations. The recommended buffers would be 50 feet for potential dens and 100 feet for known dens. If sufficient avoidance cannot be established, the City shall contact USFWS and DFG for further guidance. The measures listed below shall be implemented prior to and during construction at the project site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If any San Joaquin kit fox dens are found during preconstruction surveys, a qualified biologist shall evaluate the status of the dens no more than 14 days prior to project initiation. Provided that no evidence of kit fox occupation is observed, potential dens shall be marked and a 50-foot avoidance buffer delineated using stakes and flagging or other similar material to prevent inadvertent damage to the potential den. If a potential den cannot be avoided, it may be hand excavated following USFWS standardized recommendations for the protection of the San Joaquin kit fox prior to or during ground disturbance. If kit fox activity is observed at a den, the den status shall change to known, per USFWS guidelines (1999), and the avoidance buffer distance shall be increased to 100 feet. Absolutely no excavation of San Joaquin kit fox known or pupping dens shall occur without prior authorization from USFWS and CDFG. • All construction pipes, culverts, or similar objects with a diameter of 4 inches or more that are stored at a construction site for one or more overnight periods and shall be thoroughly inspected for kit foxes before the pipe is buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. If a kit fox is discovered inside a pipe, that section of pipe shall not be moved until USFWS has been consulted. If necessary, under the direct supervision of the biologist, the pipe may be moved once to remove it from the path of construction activity until the fox has escaped. <p>In order to be consistent with the Service's Standard Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to or During Ground Disturbance (2011), State Water Resources Control Board will require the City to conduct a preconstruction survey of the Project site no more than 30 days prior to the beginning of any Project activity that could impact the San Joaquin kit fox as a special condition to the City's financing agreement.</p>
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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.
3. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect biological resources. The SWRCB, acting as the designated non-Federal representative, requested concurrence from the Fish and Wildlife Service that the TID pipeline, including Reclamation's Proposed Action, and the City's WCP upgrade may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the San Joaquin kit fox. The Fish and Wildlife Service concurred on December 13, 2013.
4. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect land use or agriculture.
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.