

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Grassland Water District Incremental Level 4 Groundwater Acquisition Project

FONSI 14-25-MP


Recommended by:

 Date: Sept 18, 2014
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 Date: 9/18/2014
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U.S. Department of the Interior
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Background

Reclamation is responsible for providing Level 2 and Incremental Level 4 water to 19 designated federal, state, and privately owned/managed wetlands and wildlife areas (refuges), including the Grassland Resource Conservation District (GRCD). Level 2 water supplies are primarily provided from Central Valley Project (CVP) supplies. Reclamation must acquire Incremental Level 4 water supplies through various means, including spot market purchases and groundwater development. Incremental Level 4 supplies are not provided directly from CVP yield. The proposed action is needed to provide additional Incremental Level 4 water supplies to GRCD lands to maintain existing habitat for migratory waterfowl.

Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

No Action: The No Action Alternative would consist of Reclamation not acquiring groundwater from the four privately owned wells in the GRCD. Groundwater would not be delivered via the Santa Fe Canal and San Luis Canal to GRCD to help meet Incremental Level 4 refuge water needs.

Proposed Action: Reclamation proposes to use Restoration Fund funding for the urgent acquisition of Incremental Level 4 water supplies from four privately owned electrically powered groundwater production wells within GRCD. The groundwater acquisition effort is being proposed by Grassland Water District (GWD) as a five-month project (late September 2014 through the end of February 2015). The project will include monitoring well production, water quality, and groundwater levels. GWD would implement monitoring at each well location to confirm that water quality is suitable for refuge use. Based on the data acquired, a determination would be made to modify or curtail the groundwater pumping operations at any time during the five month project period.

The groundwater production wells would collectively produce up to 690 acre-feet of groundwater per month for a total 3,450 acre-feet over a five month period, which can be conveyed and used within the GRCD. Monitoring data would be used to ensure suitable water quality in the Santa Fe Canal and the San Luis Canal, and to ensure that groundwater levels are maintained and that the project would not result in significant impacts to any resources identified in this Environmental Assessment.

The proposed action would utilize existing facilities and would not involve any ground disturbance or construction.

Public Comment

Reclamation provided agencies and the public an opportunity to comment from September 10 through 17, 2014. No comments were received from the public during the comment period. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service asked that monitoring locations be added to the location figure, and that the monitoring plan be updated to further define the process for taking action should water quality standards be exceeded; these changes were incorporated into the EA.

Findings

Based on the attached environmental assessment (EA), Reclamation finds that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The EA describes the existing environmental resources in the area of the Proposed Action, and evaluates the effects of the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives on specific resources. This EA was prepared in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46). Effects on several environmental resources were examined and found to be absent or minor. That analysis is provided in the attached EA, and the analysis in the EA is hereby incorporated by reference.

Following are the reasons why the impacts of the proposed action are not significant:

1. The proposed action will not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)).
2. The proposed action will not significantly impact natural resources and unique geographical characteristics such as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation, and refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order (EO) 11990); flood plains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3) and 43 CFR 46.215(b)).
3. The proposed action will not have possible effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).
4. The proposed action will neither establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).
5. There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).
6. The proposed action will not have significant cumulative impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).
7. The proposed action has no potential to affect historic properties (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).
8. The proposed action will not affect listed or proposed threatened or endangered species (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).
9. The proposed action will not violate federal, state, tribal or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).
10. The proposed action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum

dated December 15, 1993).

11. Implementing the proposed action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities (EO 12898).

12. The proposed action will not limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007 and 512 DM 3).