

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR 2015 TEHAMA-COLUSA CANAL AUTHORITY IN BASIN WATER TRANSFERS

LEAD AGENCY: Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority
PO Box 1025
Willows, CA 95988

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS: The initial study for this proposed mitigated negative declaration is available for review at: Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority, 5513 State Highway 162, Willows, CA 95988 and online at http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_projdetails.cfm?Project_ID=20761

Questions or comments regarding this proposed mitigated negative declaration and initial study may be addressed to:

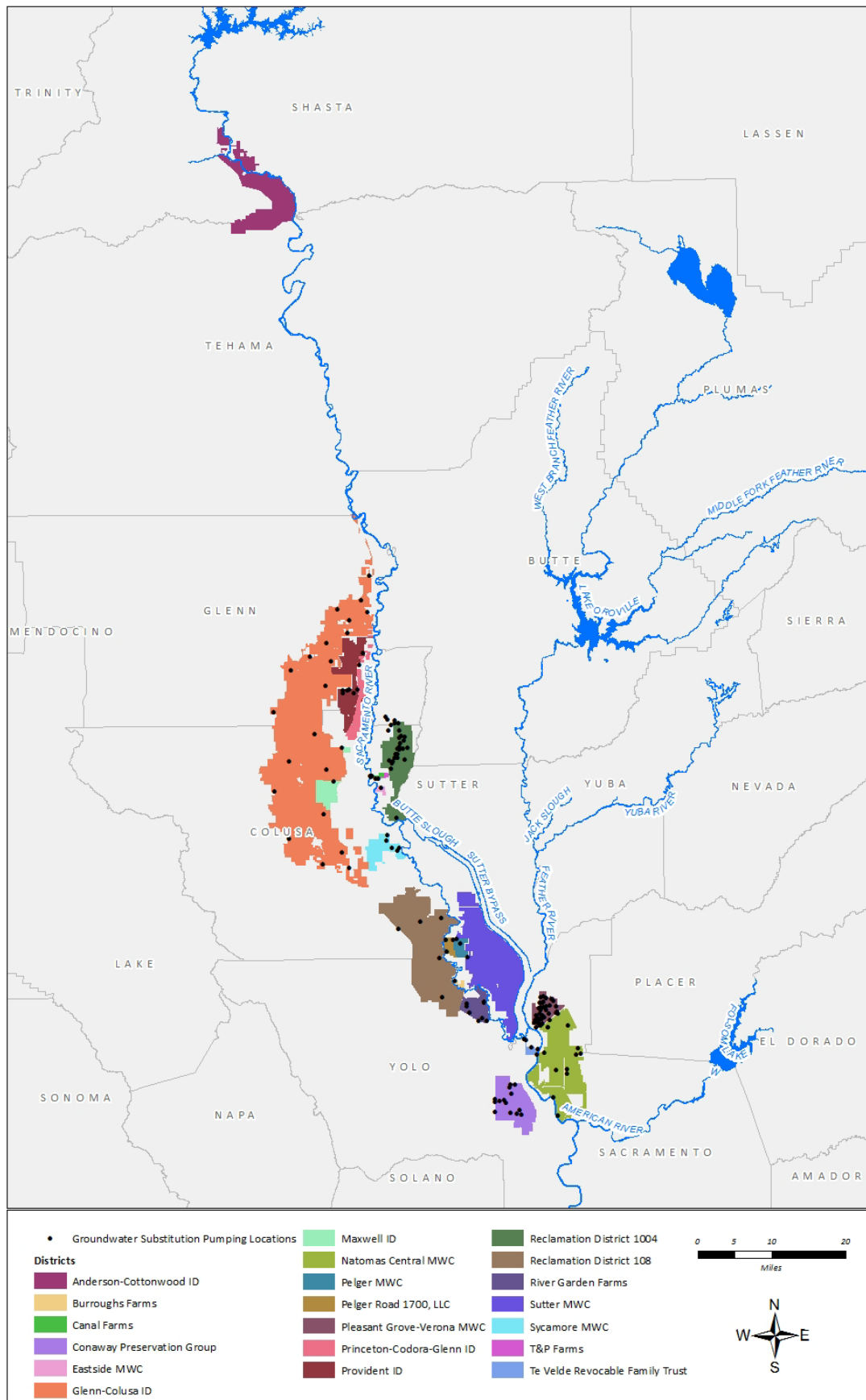
Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority
Attention: Mr. Jeff Sutton
PO Box 1025
Willows, CA 95988
Fax (530) 934-2355 or e-mail: jsutton@tccanal.com

Project Description: The Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority (TCCA) and its Member Units will experience severe water shortages in 2015 and are soliciting willing sellers to transfer water. A number of entities have expressed interest in transferring water to the Member Units of the TCCA. The TCCA would negotiate with these sellers, on behalf of the Member Units, to identify potential transfers and the specifics of each transfer arrangement, which, collectively, constitute the “proposed project” addressed in the Initial Study. Transfers would be from willing sellers within the Sacramento Valley to buyers within the Sacramento Valley. This Mitigated Negative Declaration is based on the Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA/IS) that analyzes these water transfers. The water would be made available for transfer through a combination of cropland idling and groundwater substitution.

Project Location: The proposed transfers could originate in Colusa, Glenn, Sacramento, Shasta, Sutter, Tehama, or Yolo Counties from sellers shown on the map on the next page. The transfer buyers could be in Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, or Yolo Counties.

Findings: An initial study was prepared to assess the proposed transfers’ potential effects on the environment and the significance of those impacts. Based on the initial study, the TCCA has determined that the proposed project will not have a significant impact on the environment. This conclusion is supported by the following findings:

- The project will not result in impacts to agriculture and forestry resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, and utilities and service systems
- The project will result in less than significant impacts to aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hydrology and water quality, and noise.



Potential Selling Entities

Mitigation Measures: The initial study incorporated the following mitigation measures:

- AQ-1 – Selling agency would reduce pumping at diesel wells to reduce emissions to below the thresholds. If an agency is transferring water through cropland idling and groundwater substitution in the same year, the reduction in vehicle emissions can partially offset groundwater substitution pumping at a rate of 4.25 acre-feet (AF) of water produced by idling to one acre-foot of groundwater pumped. Agencies may also decide to replace old diesel wells to reduce emission below the thresholds.

If a selling agency, through the actions above, can reduce daily emissions below thresholds while operating wells 24 hours per day, then that agency must provide an analysis to Reclamation. This analysis should identify that all wells proposed for participation in a 2015 Water Transfer may be operated on a 24-hour per day basis without exceeding emission thresholds.

Alternately, if a selling agency with potentially significant emissions, as determined by this EA/IS, intends to operate wells less than 24 hours per day to reduce emissions below the thresholds, then that agency will be required to maintain daily recordkeeping logs that document the specific engine to be used for groundwater substitution transfers, the power rating (hp), and applicable emission factors. Emission calculations will be completed daily for comparison to the significance thresholds determined for each selling agency. The recordkeeping logs will be sent to Reclamation monthly for verification that emissions are within the allowable limits.

Reclamation will also work with the water agencies to inform individual growers of incentive funding available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Funded conservation practices include the replacement of internal combustion engines in irrigation pumps; therefore, the program may be used by growers to further reduce criteria pollutant emissions.

- GW-1: Monitoring Program and Mitigation Plan
The *DRAFT Technical Information for Preparing Water Transfer Proposals* (Reclamation and DWR 2014) provide guidance for the development of proposals for groundwater substitution water transfers. The objectives of the monitoring and reporting plan are: (1) minimize potential effects to other legal users of water; (2) provide a process for review and response to reported effects; (3) assure that a local mitigation strategy is in place prior to the groundwater transfer; (4) mitigate significant adverse environmental effects that occur. The seller will be responsible for mitigating any significant environmental impacts that occur.

Each entity participating in a groundwater substitution transfer will be required to confirm that the proposed groundwater pumping will be compatible with state and local regulations, existing Groundwater Management Plans (GMPs), and Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) (if they exist). Reclamation's transfer approval process and groundwater mitigation measures set forth a framework that is designed to avoid and minimize adverse groundwater effects. Reclamation will verify that sellers adopt and implement these measures to minimize the potential for adverse effects related to groundwater extraction.

Well Review Process

Potential sellers will be required to submit well data for Reclamation and, where appropriate, DWR review, as part of the transfer approval process. Required information will be detailed in the most current version of the *DRAFT Technical Information for Preparing Water Transfer Proposals*.

Monitoring Program

Potential sellers will be required to complete and implement a monitoring program subject to Reclamation's approval that must, at a minimum, include the following components:

- o *Monitoring Well Network.* The monitoring program will incorporate a sufficient number of monitoring wells to accurately characterize groundwater levels and response in the area before, during, and after transfer pumping takes place.
- o *Groundwater Pumping Measurements.* All wells pumping to replace surface water designated for transfer shall be configured with a permanent instantaneous and totalizing flow meter capable of accurately measuring well discharge rates and volumes. Flow meter readings will be recorded just prior to initiation of pumping and at designated times, but no less than monthly and as close as practical to the last day of the month, throughout the duration of the transfer.
- o *Groundwater Levels.* Sellers will collect measurements of groundwater levels in both participating transfer wells and monitoring wells. Groundwater level monitoring will include measurements before, during and after transfer-related pumping. The water transfer proponent will measure groundwater levels as follows:
 - Prior to transfer: Groundwater levels will be measured monthly from March in the year of the proposed transfer until the start of the transfer (where possible).
 - Start of transfer: Groundwater levels will be measured on the same day that the transfer begins, prior to the pump being turned on.
 - During transfer: Groundwater levels will be measured throughout the transfer period at the frequency specified in most current DRAFT Technical Information for Preparing Water Transfer Proposals.
 - Post-transfer: Groundwater levels will be measured weekly for one month after the end of transfer pumping, after which groundwater levels will be measured monthly through March of the year following the transfer.
- o *Groundwater Quality.* For municipal sellers, the comprehensive water quality testing requirements of Title 22 should be sufficient for the water transfer monitoring program. Agricultural sellers shall measure specific conductance in samples from each participating production well. Samples shall be collected when the seller first initiates pumping, monthly during the transfer period, and at the termination of transfer pumping.
- o *Land Subsidence.* Subsidence monitoring will be required if groundwater levels could decline below historic low levels during the proposed water transfer. If the measured groundwater level falls below the historic low level, land surface elevation measurements in strategic locations within and/or near the transfer area will be required. Measurements may include (1) extensometer monitoring, (2) continuous GPS monitoring, or (3) extensive land-elevation benchmark surveys conducted by a licensed surveyor. This data could be collected by the seller or from other sources (such as public extensometer data). Measurements must be completed on a monthly basis during the transfer.

- o *Coordination Plan.* The monitoring program will include a plan to coordinate the collection and organization of monitoring data, and communication with the well operators and other decision makers.
- o *Evaluation and Reporting.* The proposed monitoring program will describe the method of reporting monitoring data. At a minimum, sellers will provide data summary tables to Reclamation, both during and after transfer-related groundwater pumping. Post-program reporting will continue through March of the year following the transfer. Water transfer proponents will provide a final summary report to Reclamation evaluating the effects of the water transfer. The final report will identify transfer-related impacts on groundwater and surface water (both during and after pumping), and the extent and significance, if any, of impacts on local groundwater users. It should include groundwater elevation contour maps for the area in which transfer operations are located, showing pre-transfer groundwater elevations, groundwater elevations at the end of the transfer, and recovered groundwater elevations in March of the year following the transfer.

Mitigation Plan

Potential sellers will also be required to complete and implement a mitigation plan. If the seller's monitoring efforts indicate that the operation of wells for groundwater substitution pumping are causing substantial adverse impacts, the seller will be responsible for mitigating any significant environmental impacts that occur. Mitigation actions must be implemented to reduce impacts to a less than significant level and could include:

- o Curtailment of pumping until natural recharge corrects the issue.
- o Lowering of pumping bowls in non-transferring wells affected by transfer pumping.
- o Reimbursement for significant increases in pumping costs due to the additional groundwater pumping to support the transfer.
- o Curtailment of pumping until water levels rise above historic lows if non-reversible subsidence is detected (based on local data to identify elastic versus inelastic subsidence).
- o Reimbursement for modifications to infrastructure that may be affected by non-reversible subsidence.
- o Other actions as appropriate.

To ensure that mitigation plans will be feasible, effective, and tailored to local conditions, the plan must include the following elements:

- o A procedure for the seller to receive reports of purported environmental or effects to non-transferring parties;
- o A procedure for investigating any reported effect;
- o Development of mitigation options, in cooperation with the affected parties, for legitimate significant effects; and
- o Assurances that adequate financial resources are available to cover reasonably anticipated mitigation needs.

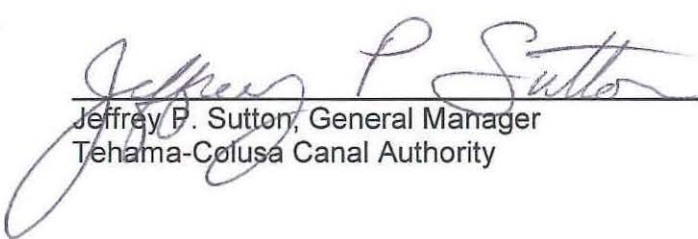
The purpose of Mitigation Measure GW-1 is to monitor groundwater levels during transfers to avoid potential significant adverse effects. The mitigation plan will describe how to address those any significant adverse effects that may occur despite the monitoring efforts. The objectives of this process are to: (1) minimize potential effects to other legal users of water; (2) provide a process for review and response to reported effects; (3) assure that a local mitigation strategy is in place prior to the groundwater transfer; and (4) mitigate any significant adverse environmental effects that occur.

Each potential seller will be required to confirm that the proposed groundwater pumping will be compatible with state and local regulations and GMPs. Reclamation's transfer approval process and groundwater mitigation measures set forth a framework that is designed to avoid and minimize adverse groundwater effects. Reclamation will verify that sellers adopt and implement these measures to minimize the potential for adverse effects related to groundwater extraction.

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

- No substantial evidence exists that the proposed project would have a negative or adverse effect on the environment.
- The project would not substantially degrade the quality of the environment, significantly reduce the habitat for fish and wildlife species, result in fish or wildlife populations below a self-sustaining level, reduce the number or restrict the range of a special-status species, or eliminate important examples of California history or prehistory.
- The project would not have environmental effects that would cause substantial direct or indirect adverse effects on humans.
- The project would not have environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable.

In accordance with Section 21082.1 of the California Environmental Quality Act, the TCCA staff has independently reviewed and analyzed the initial study (attached) and proposed mitigated negative declaration for the proposed project and finds that the initial study and proposed mitigated negative declaration reflect the independent judgment of the TCCA staff.


Jeffrey P. Sutton, General Manager
Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority

2-26-15
Date

Notice of Completion & Environmental Document Transmittal

Mail to: State Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 3044, Sacramento, CA 95812-3044 (916) 445-0613
 For Hand Delivery/Street Address: 1400 Tenth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

SCH #

Project Title: 2015 Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority Water Transfers

Lead Agency: Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority

Contact Person: Jeff Sutton

Mailing Address: PO Box 1025

Phone: (530) 934-2125

City: Willows

Zip: 95988

County: Glenn

Project Location: County: Multiple - see project description City/Nearest Community: Multiple - see project description

Cross Streets: N/A - interagency water transfer Zip Code: _____

Longitude/Latitude (degrees, minutes and seconds): 39 ° 31 ' 27.1 " N / 122 ° 13 ' 08.5 " W Total Acres: N/A

Assessor's Parcel No.: N/A - interagency water transfer Section: _____ Twp.: _____ Range: _____ Base: _____

Within 2 Miles: State Hwy #: _____ Waterways: _____

Airports: _____ Railways: _____ Schools: _____

Document Type:

CEQA: ☐ NOP ☐ Draft EIR NEPA: ☐ NOI Other: ☒ Joint Document
☐ Early Cons ☐ Supplement/Subsequent EIR ☒ EA ☐ Final Document
☐ Neg Dec (Prior SCH No.) _____ ☐ Draft EIS ☐ Other: _____
☒ Mit Neg Dec Other: _____ ☐ FONSI

Local Action Type:

☐ General Plan Update ☐ Specific Plan ☐ Rezone ☐ Annexation
☐ General Plan Amendment ☐ Master Plan ☐ Prezone ☐ Redevelopment
☐ General Plan Element ☐ Planned Unit Development ☐ Use Permit ☐ Coastal Permit
☐ Community Plan ☐ Site Plan ☐ Land Division (Subdivision, etc.) ☒ Other: Water transfer

Development Type:

☐ Residential: Units _____ Acres _____ ☐ Transportation: Type _____
☐ Office: Sq.ft. _____ Acres _____ Employees _____ ☐ Mining: Mineral _____
☐ Commercial: Sq.ft. _____ Acres _____ Employees _____ ☐ Power: Type _____ MW _____
☐ Industrial: Sq.ft. _____ Acres _____ Employees _____ ☐ Waste Treatment: Type _____ MGD _____
☐ Educational: _____ ☐ Hazardous Waste: Type _____
☐ Recreational: _____ ☒ Other: Inter-agency water transfer
☐ Water Facilities: Type _____ MGD _____

Project Issues Discussed in Document:

☐ Aesthetic/Visual ☐ Fiscal ☐ Recreation/Parks ☒ Vegetation
☐ Agricultural Land ☐ Flood Plain/Flooding ☐ Schools/Universities ☒ Water Quality
☒ Air Quality ☐ Forest Land/Fire Hazard ☐ Septic Systems ☒ Water Supply/Groundwater
☐ Archeological/Historical ☐ Geologic/Seismic ☐ Sewer Capacity ☒ Wetland/Riparian
☒ Biological Resources ☐ Minerals ☐ Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading ☐ Growth Inducement
☐ Coastal Zone ☐ Noise ☐ Solid Waste ☐ Land Use
☐ Drainage/Absorption ☐ Population/Housing Balance ☐ Toxic/Hazardous ☐ Cumulative Effects
☒ Economic/Jobs ☐ Public Services/Facilities ☐ Traffic/Circulation ☐ Other: _____

Present Land Use/Zoning/General Plan Designation:

Seller actions will occur on agricultural property and water will be transferred to agricultural buyers.

Project Description: (please use a separate page if necessary)

This Mitigated Negative Declaration and IS/EA analyzes environmental impacts of proposed water transfers from willing sellers to buyers in the Sacramento Valley help address water shortages. This environmental document includes transfers of Central Valley Project (CVP) water from entities in northern California to participating members of the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority. The water would be made available for transfer through a combination of cropland idling and groundwater substitution. The transfers could originate in Colusa, Glenn, Sacramento, Shasta, Sutter, Tehama, or Yolo counties. The transfer buyers could be in Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, or Yolo counties.

Reviewing Agencies Checklist

Lead Agencies may recommend State Clearinghouse distribution by marking agencies below with an "X".
If you have already sent your document to the agency please denote that with an "S".

☒ Air Resources Board	☐ Office of Historic Preservation
☐ Boating & Waterways, Department of	☐ Office of Public School Construction
☐ California Emergency Management Agency	☐ Parks & Recreation, Department of
☐ California Highway Patrol	☐ Pesticide Regulation, Department of
☐ Caltrans District # _____	☐ Public Utilities Commission
☐ Caltrans Division of Aeronautics	☐ Regional WQCB # _____
☐ Caltrans Planning	☐ Resources Agency
☐ Central Valley Flood Protection Board	☐ Resources Recycling and Recovery, Department of
☐ Coachella Valley Mtns. Conservancy	☐ S.F. Bay Conservation & Development Comm.
☐ Coastal Commission	☐ San Gabriel & Lower L.A. Rivers & Mtns. Conservancy
☐ Colorado River Board	☐ San Joaquin River Conservancy
☐ Conservation, Department of	☐ Santa Monica Mtns. Conservancy
☐ Corrections, Department of	☐ State Lands Commission
☐ Delta Protection Commission	☐ SWRCB: Clean Water Grants
☐ Education, Department of	☒ SWRCB: Water Quality
☐ Energy Commission	☒ SWRCB: Water Rights
☒ Fish & Game Region # <u>1,2</u>	☐ Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
☐ Food & Agriculture, Department of	☐ Toxic Substances Control, Department of
☐ Forestry and Fire Protection, Department of	☒ Water Resources, Department of
☐ General Services, Department of	
☐ Health Services, Department of	☐ Other: _____
☐ Housing & Community Development	☐ Other: _____
☐ Native American Heritage Commission	

Local Public Review Period (to be filled in by lead agency)

Starting Date March 2, 2015 Ending Date March 23, 2015

Lead Agency (Complete if applicable):

Consulting Firm: <u>CDM Smith</u>	Applicant: _____
Address: <u>1755 Creekside Oaks Drive, Suite 200</u>	Address: _____
City/State/Zip: <u>Sacramento, CA 95833</u>	City/State/Zip: _____
Contact: <u>Carrie Buckman</u>	Phone: _____
Phone: <u>916-567-9900</u>	

Signature of Lead Agency Representative: _____

Date: 2/26/15

Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code. Reference: Section 21161, Public Resources Code.

INITIAL STUDY FOR 2015 TEHAMA-COLUSA CANAL AUTHORITY WATER TRANSFERS

1. Project title: 2015 Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority Water Transfers
2. Lead agency name and address: Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority
PO Box 1025
Willows, CA 95988
3. Contact person and phone number: Mr. Jeff Sutton, (530) 934-2125
4. Project location: The proposed transfers could originate in Colusa, Glenn, Sacramento, Shasta, Sutter, Tehama, or Yolo counties. The transfer buyers could be in Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, or Yolo counties.
5. Project sponsor's name and address: Same as Lead Agency.
6. General plan designation: Not Applicable – Interagency Agricultural Water Transfers
7. Zoning: All lands with potential to participate in the transfers are agricultural.
8. Description of project: (Describe the whole action involved, including but not limited to later phases of the project, and any secondary, support, or off-site features necessary for its implementation. Attach additional sheets if necessary.)
Refer to Chapter 2 of the Initial Study.
9. Surrounding land uses and setting: Briefly describe the project's surroundings:
Refer to Chapter 2 of the Initial Study.
10. Other public agencies whose approval is required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement.)
The Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority will coordinate with their Member Units and the sellers identified in this Initial Study. Transfer negotiations will occur between the Authority and interested sellers. Reclamation approval is required for transfer of water subject to Reclamation contract and use of Central Valley Project facilities. As a Federal agency, Reclamation does not complete CEQA compliance; however, Reclamation will verify that buyers and sellers have complied with CEQA in accordance with Central Valley Project Improvement Act requirements. Chapter 2 describes the involvement of State agencies, including the California Department of Water Resources and State Water Resources Control Board.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Aesthetics | ☐ Agriculture and Forestry Resources | ☐ Air Quality |
| ☐ Biological Resources | ☐ Cultural Resources | ☐ Geology / Soils |
| ☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions | ☐ Hazards & Hazardous Materials | ☐ Hydrology / Water Quality |
| ☐ Land Use / Planning | ☐ Mineral Resources | ☐ Noise |
| ☐ Population / Housing | ☐ Public Services | ☐ Recreation |
| ☐ Transportation/Traffic | ☐ Utilities / Service Systems | ☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance |

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

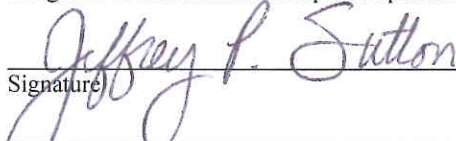
☐ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.



Signature

2-26-15

Date

Date