

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Time Extension to Use Central Valley Project Water and Base Supply by Sacramento River Settlement Contractors in Contract Year 2015

Final FONSI 15-05-NCAO

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Introduction

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to temporarily extend the time period for use of Base Supply and Central Valley Project Water, herein collectively “Diverted Water”, remaining under the Sacramento River Settlement Contracts, or a portion thereof, to allow operational flexibility for Central Valley Operations that improves environmental benefits north and south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The period for the use of the water would be extended from October 31 to December 10, 2015.

In accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Northern California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for this action. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation’s Environmental Assessment (EA) Number EA-15-05-NCAO, *Time Extension to Use Central Valley Project Water and Base Supply by Sacramento River Settlement Contractors in Contract Year 2015*, which is incorporated by reference and attached.

Alternatives Including Proposed Action

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would consist of Reclamation not approving the time extension for use of Diverted Water from October 31 to December 10, 2015. Up to 49,999 acre-feet (af) of Diverted Water would be diverted in the later part of October.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is approval of extending the use of up to 49,999 acre-feet (af) of Diverted Water from October 31 to December 10, 2015.

The Project Water and Base Supply to be used in either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative would originate at Shasta Lake and flow through existing features including the Shasta Powerplant, Keswick Reservoir, and Keswick Powerplant where it would be incorporated into normal operations and flow to the Sacramento River.

All diversion locations are pre-existing and have approved fish screens to avoid impacting listed and threatened species in the Sacramento River system. The diverted quantities will occur at a steady rate during this extension period. Flow from Project Reservoirs would remain the same as in the No Action Alternative (e.g. Keswick Dam releases would not change), which maintains previously-approved conditions of operation of the Central Valley Project for 2015 to meet endangered and threatened species requirements

Water diverted under the both the Proposed Action and no Action Alternative would utilize existing facilities and infrastructure. The diversion would not involve ground disturbance, the construction of new facilities or modification of existing facilities. The action would be limited to a single Year and would comply with all applicable federal, state, local or Tribal laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment, cultural resources and Indian Trust Assets (ITAs).

Findings

Reclamation's determination that implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment is supported by the attached EA and is summarized as the following:

- The Proposed Action is specific to the extension of the time period of use for water previously assigned for diversion in the current contract year only and is not anticipated to be precedent-setting.
- No significant changes in power and energy resources would result from the Proposed Action because the timing and magnitude of water releases from Keswick Dam and other CVP reservoirs are the same as the No Action Alternative.
- No changes in land use or agricultural will result from the Proposed Action. Rice fields will still be flooded with the same total amount of water; the only change would be the timing of distribution. Rice farmers would neither plow nor disc their fields when a portion of the October flood-up water delivery is delayed. The Proposed Action does not change the intended goal for decomposition of harvested rice field as a means of preparation of farming land for the following year, and only changes the timing of flooding.
- No adverse impacts to physical resources, including unique geological features such as wetlands, Wild and Scenic rivers, refuges, floodplains, and/or rivers placed on the nationwide river inventory, are anticipated from of the Proposed Action. The additional time for diversion in the Proposed Action would allow for a more evenly-distributed diversion of the water, resulting in less change in the flow rate of the lower Sacramento River.
- Species listed as Federally Threatened or Endangered and their habitats are present in the Project Area. Fish and waterfowl are anticipated to be the species with the greatest potential for impact, due to the nature and timing of the proposal. No significant adverse impacts to listed species or their habitats are anticipated from the proposal.
 - Fry and juveniles salmonids, including federally- listed species, are likely to be present in the Sacramento River during the period when diversions would occur under either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative. However, in the Proposed Action, there is a smaller reduction in flow over a longer period of time than the No Action Alternative. This more stable flow, in combination with the anticipated increase in

precipitation and natural accretion during the time period of the Proposed Action, would function to further ameliorate the potential for habitat deficiencies that could lead to increased predation. As such, any effects to fish species are expected to be lower in the Proposed Action than the No Action Alternative.

- The Proposed Action provides a timelier and more even distribution of water for rice and habitat lands within the contractual service area of the SRSC to the benefit of overwintering waterfowl that typically arrive later in the year. Providing continuous habitat and forage, the Proposed Action would alleviate stress that would exist in the No Action Alternative.
- The Proposed Action would not adversely affect the quality of human environment or public health or safety, or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources under it or the No Action Alternative, because they essentially maintain present conditions. Water diverted as part of this action does not affect irrigation demand because the irrigation season is over during the period considered for the Proposed Action. Minor shifts in the location of water use would occur, but would be too small to noticeably affect regional economics. The Proposed Action does, however, help to facilitate efficient use of the contemplated water resources for the intended purposes. Review of the proposal is within the bounds of Reclamation's jurisdiction. The intent of the Proposed Action is in concert with Reclamation's agency mission. Activities that would be completed under the Proposed Action are in concert with Federal, state and local laws, regulations and codes imposed for the protection of the environment. Further, multiple conservation organizations have formally voiced support for the Proposed Action. For these reasons, Reclamation's approval of the Proposed Action is not anticipated to be received as highly controversial.
- The Proposed Action would not disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations and communities.
- The Proposed Action would not impact historic properties or other cultural resources due to the lack of ground disturbance or construction activities.
- The Proposed Action would not limit access to, or ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites and would not result in impacts to these sites.
- The Proposed Action would not impact Indian Trust Assets (ITAs).
- The Proposed Action would not result in any adverse cumulative impacts.