

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

## **Additional Points of Delivery for Panoche Water District's Non- Project Groundwater to Westlands Water District**

FONSI-16-009



## **Mission Statements**

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provide scientific and other information about those resources; and honor its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.


**BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**  
**South-Central California Area Office, Fresno, California**

**FONSI-16-009**

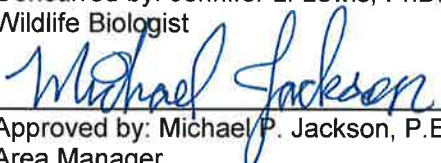
**Additional Points of Delivery for Panoche  
Water District's Non-Project Groundwater  
to Westlands Water District**

  
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05/12/2016  
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May 12, 2016  
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May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Date



# 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 the approval of additional points of delivery along the San Luis Canal (SLC) to Westlands Water District (Westlands) for groundwater introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal (DMC) by Panoche Water District (Panoche) pursuant to Warren Act Contract No. 13-WC-20-4386.

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA)-16-009, *Additional Points of Delivery for Panoche Water District's Non-Project Groundwater to Westlands Water District*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Reclamation provided the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft FONSI and Draft EA between May 4, 2016 and May 10, 2016. No comments were received.

## Background

In 2012, the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (SLDMWA), on behalf of eight of its member agencies, requested approval from Reclamation to pump groundwater into the DMC for storage and conveyance to South-of-Delta Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors over a 10-year period (referred to as the DMC Groundwater Pump-in Program). Reclamation analyzed the 10-year Groundwater Pump-in Program in EA-12-061. Based on specific environmental commitments included in the DMC Groundwater Pump-in Program, including water quality requirements, Reclamation determined that the cumulative introduction, storage, and conveyance of up to 50,000 acre-feet (AF) per year of groundwater would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and a FONSI was issued on January 10, 2013.

On May 1, 2013, Reclamation executed a temporary 5-year Warren Act contract (Contract No. 13-WC-20-4386) with Panoche for the annual introduction and storage of up to 10,000 AF of its groundwater into the DMC as part of the DMC Groundwater Pump-in Program. Points of delivery for this groundwater include Panoche's existing turnouts on the DMC and SLC. As described in EA-12-061, storage and delivery via the SLC is done by exchanging with Reclamation introduced groundwater for an equivalent amount of CVP water. In 2014, Panoche requested approval from Reclamation to include additional points of delivery for up to 5,000 AF of its pumped groundwater to Westlands' turnouts along the SLC through February 28, 2015. The additional points of delivery were analyzed in EA-14-022 and a FONSI was issued on July 9, 2014. As these assessments expired on February 28, 2015, Panoche has requested additional approval to continue to deliver up to 5,000 AF per year of their pumped groundwater to Westlands through the remaining term of their Contract (February 28, 2018).

## **Proposed Action**

Reclamation proposes to approve additional points of delivery for up to 5,000 AF of Panoche's non-Project groundwater introduced into the DMC as part of the DMC Groundwater Pump-in Program through February 28, 2018. The 5,000 AF is included in the up to 10,000 AF provided for under Panoche's existing 5-year Warren Act contract which is included in the cumulative total (50,000 AF per year) allowed under the DMC Groundwater Pump-in Program. The additional points of delivery would include existing turnouts along the SLC for Westlands.

## **Environmental Commitments**

As required by Panoche's Warren Act contract and analyzed in EA-12-061, Panoche shall continue to implement the environmental commitments required for the DMC Groundwater Pump-in Program. In addition, Westlands would implement the environmental protection measures listed in Table 1 of EA-16-009 to reduce potential environmental consequences due to the Proposed Action. Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

## **Findings**

Reclamation's finding that implementation of the Proposed Action will result in no significant impact to the quality of the human environment is supported by the following findings:

### **Resources Eliminated from Detailed Analysis**

As described in Table 2 of EA-16-009, Reclamation analyzed the affected environment and determined that the Proposed Action does not have the potential to cause direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects to the following resources: air quality, cultural resources, environmental justice, geology, global climate change and energy use, Indian Sacred Sites, Indian Trust Assets, land use, or socioeconomic resources.

### **Biological Resources**

The flow regime of natural waterways or natural watercourses such as rivers, streams, creeks, ponds, pools, wetlands, etc., would not be altered as a result of the Proposed Action. In addition, the Proposed Action would not involve the conversion of any land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. As such, Reclamation has determined there would be no effect to proposed or listed species or critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq.). Therefore, no consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service is necessary. Reclamation has also determined that there would be no take of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §703 et seq.) as none would be affected by the Proposed Action.

### **Water Resources**

Under the Proposed Action, Panoche would continue to introduce up to 10,000 AF of groundwater into the DMC pursuant to its existing Warren Act contract. Up to 5,000 AF of this groundwater would be delivered to Westlands via existing turnouts along the SLC. No additional groundwater pumping would occur in order to provide this water to Westlands beyond what was previously approved and analyzed in EA-12-061 and EA-14-022.

**Cumulative Impacts**

Cumulative impacts result from incremental impacts of the Proposed Action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment.

Reclamation has reviewed existing or foreseeable projects in the same geographic area that could affect or could be affected by the Proposed Action. As in the past, hydrological conditions and other factors are likely to result in fluctuating water supplies which drive requests for water service actions. Water districts provide water to their customers based on available water supplies and timing, while attempting to minimize costs. Farmers irrigate and grow crops based on these conditions and factors, and a myriad of water service actions are approved and executed each year to facilitate water needs. It is likely that in 2016, more districts will request transfers and Warren Act contracts due to hydrologic conditions. Each water service transaction involving Reclamation undergoes environmental review prior to approval.

***Biological Resources***

As the Proposed Action is not expected to result in any direct or indirect impacts to biological resources, there would be no cumulative impacts.

***Water Resources***

The Proposed Action and other similar projects would not hinder the normal operations of the CVP and Reclamation's obligation to deliver water to its contractors or to local fish and wildlife habitat. Since the Proposed Action would not involve construction or modification of facilities, nor interfere with CVP or State Water Project operations, there would be no cumulative impacts to existing facilities or other contractors.

Capacity in the DMC and SLC is limited, and if many water actions were scheduled to take place concurrently they could cumulatively compete for space. However, non-Project water would only be allowed to enter the DMC and SLC if excess capacity is available. As such, the Proposed Action would not limit the ability of other users to make use of the facilities.