

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Exchange Agreement for Water in San Luis Reservoir and Millerton Lake to Facilitate Water Supply for the Exchange Contractors and Friant Division Contractors

FONSI-16-025



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

July 2016

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.

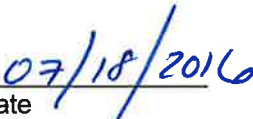
The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

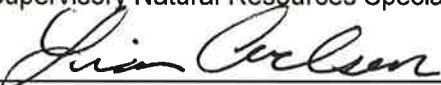
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
South-Central California Area Office, Fresno, California

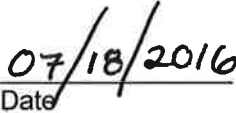
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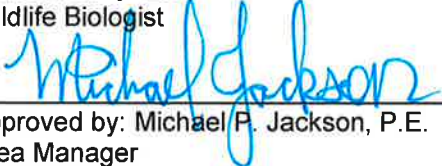
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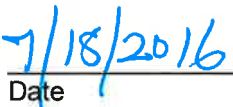

Prepared by: Rain L. Emerson
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist


Date


Concurred by: Lisa Carlson
Wildlife Biologist


Date


Approved by: Michael P. Jackson, P.E.
Area Manager


Date

Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for the operational exchange of up to 60,000 acre-feet of available water supplies between Millerton Lake and San Luis Reservoir. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA)-16-025, *Exchange Agreement for Water in San Luis Reservoir and Millerton Lake to Facilitate Water Supply for the Exchange Contractors and Friant Division Contractors*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

The San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors (Exchange Contractors), which include Central California Irrigation District, Firebaugh Canal Water District, San Luis Canal Company and Columbia Canal Company hold certain historic senior water rights to water supplies in the San Joaquin River watershed. In exchange for the Central Valley Project's (CVP's) regulation and diversion of San Joaquin River water at Millerton Lake/Friant Dam for the Friant Division, Reclamation agreed to provide water to the Exchange Contractors from the CVP's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) supply. However, in the event that only a portion of this supply can be met from the CVP's Delta supplies, Reclamation provides San Joaquin River water from Millerton Lake via the San Joaquin River channel for delivery to the Exchange Contractors at the Mendota Pool pursuant to contract obligations.

Due to unavoidable operational circumstances this summer, there is concern regarding Reclamation's ability to meet its water delivery obligations south of the Delta, including supplies to the Exchange Contractors. In order to avoid an interruption in water deliveries and disputes between the parties, Reclamation and the Friant Division Contractors have reached an agreement whereby Reclamation and the Friant Division Contractors will cooperate to effectuate operational exchanges whereby San Joaquin River water in Millerton Lake can be exchanged for water in San Luis Reservoir. As part of the agreement, Reclamation and the Friant Division Contractors have agreed that 130,000 acre-feet of CVP water is available (or will become available) in the watershed of the San Joaquin River. This water is currently unallocated by Reclamation. In consideration of the Friant Division Contractors assisting Reclamation to effectuate the proposed operational exchanges, Reclamation has increased the 2016 allocation of water to the Friant Division Contractors by 10% (or 80,000 acre-feet) from the present 65% to 75% of Class 1 Contract Total.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to exchange up to 60,000 acre-feet of the Friant Division Contractors' available water supplies as described in EA-16-025.

Environmental Commitments

Reclamation, Friant Division Contractors, and the Exchange Contractors shall implement the environmental protection measures included in Table 1 of EA-16-025. 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-16-025, 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, global climate change, Indian Sacred Sites, Indian Trust Assets, land use, or socioeconomic resources.

Biological Resources

As the Proposed Action does not involve any construction, changes in water diversions from natural waterways, or any land use change, there would be no impacts to federally listed, candidate species, or critical habitat. As a result, 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.), and there would be no take of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §703 et seq.).

Water Resources

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would exchange up to 60,000 acre-feet of available CVP and SWP water supplies between Millerton Lake and San Luis Reservoir as described in Section 2.2. This water would be used to meet Reclamation's contractual obligations for the Exchange Contractors via the Delta-Mendota Canal in lieu of releasing San Joaquin River water from Millerton Lake down the San Joaquin River to the Mendota Pool. A portion of the water kept in Millerton Lake as a result of this exchange would be provided to the Friant Division Contractors as part of their 10% allocation increase. The proposed exchanges would provide additional water to the Friant Division Contractors that would not otherwise be available.

As the water is existing supplies held in San Luis Reservoir, no additional Delta pumping would be needed to facilitate this exchange. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not affect CVP or SWP operations and would not change existing diversion points from the Delta under Reclamation's or the California Department of Water Resources' water rights permits. The Proposed Action would not interfere with Reclamation's obligations to deliver water to other contractors, wetland habitat areas, or for other environmental purposes.

In addition, the proposed exchanges would utilize existing facilities and not require new infrastructure, modification of existing facilities, or ground disturbing activities. The water would be used for existing agricultural and municipal purposes. No native or untillied land (fallow for three years or more) would be cultivated with water involved with these actions.

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 since Reclamation and CVP contractors have been working on various drought-related projects, including this one, in order to manage limited water supplies due to current hydrologic conditions and regulatory requirements. This and similar projects would have a cumulative beneficial effect on water supply during this critically dry year.

Water Resources

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 over the course of the Proposed Action, districts will request various water service actions, such as transfers, exchanges, and Warren Act contracts (conveyance of non-CVP water in CVP facilities). Each water service transaction involving Reclamation undergoes environmental review prior to approval.

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, there would be no cumulative impacts to existing facilities or other contractors.

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.