

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Fresno Irrigation District Gould Canal to Friant Kern Canal Intertie Project

FONSI-15-062



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

August 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.

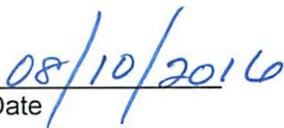
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
South-Central California Area Office, Fresno, California

FONSI-15-062

Fresno Irrigation District
Gould Canal to Friant Kern Canal Intertie
Project



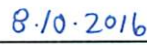
Prepared by: Rain L. Emerson
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist



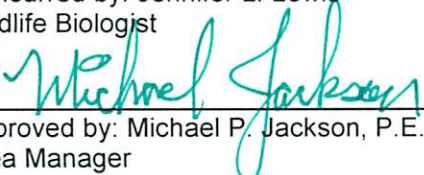
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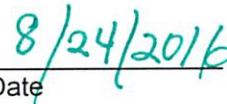
Concurred by: Jennifer L. Lewis
Wildlife Biologist



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 entering into a series of Warren Act Contracts and/or exchange agreements and issuing permits and land use authorizations to Fresno Irrigation District (Fresno ID) for construction, operation, and maintenance of a new pump station and intertie that would connect the Friant-Kern Canal and the Gould Canal are not major federal actions that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA)-15-062, *Fresno Irrigation District Gould Canal to Friant Kern Canal Intertie Project*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Reclamation provided the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft FONSI and Draft EA between May 17, 2016 and June 15, 2016. One comment letter was received. The comment letter and Reclamation's response to comments is included in Appendix A of Final EA-15-062.

Background

In order to address water supply needs during the severe drought, Fresno ID installed a temporary pumping facility within Reclamation's right-of-way that temporarily connected the Gould Canal to the Friant-Kern Canal in order to provide a mechanism to introduce Fresno ID's non-Project Kings River water into the Friant-Kern Canal over a five year period. Reclamation analyzed the proposed project in EA-14-003 and a FONSI was issued on March 21, 2014. In order to further increase water supply reliability, enhance operational flexibility, and reduce system constraints, Fresno ID has requested approval from Reclamation to construct a more permanent connection between the Gould Canal and the Friant-Kern Canal in the same general area as the temporary facility.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to do the following: (1) enter into a series of Warren Act Contracts and/or transfer or exchange agreements over a 25 year period for the introduction, storage, and conveyance of up to 50,000 acre-feet (AF) per year (AFY) of Fresno ID's Kings River water and/or previously banked non-CVP groundwater (hereafter referred to as non-Project water) into and through Friant Division facilities as described in Section 2.2.1 of EA-15-062, (2) issue an MP-620 permit¹ to Fresno ID for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a new discharge structure at approximate milepost 27.7 of the Friant-Kern Canal, (3) issue a land use authorization to Fresno ID for construction, operation, and maintenance of a new pump station

¹ Mid-Pacific Region specific permit for modification or alteration of Federal Facilities

and associated appurtenances within Reclamation's right of way as described in Section 2.2.2 of EA-15-062, and (4) partially fund the Proposed Action through a 50/50 cost share program.

On August 20, 1947, Reclamation and Fresno ID executed an agreement entitled "Contract for Transfer to the United States of Existing Right of Way for the Gould Canal and the Relocation and Construction of a Portion of the Gould Canal on New Right of Way in Replacement Thereof" that provided for the transfer of land and granting of an easement from Reclamation to Fresno ID's Gould Canal siphon crossing under the Friant-Kern Canal. If the previously executed transfer deed and grant of easement documents cannot be located, Reclamation would issue a new transfer of land and easement to Fresno ID as provided for in the 1947 agreement. The transfer of land to Fresno ID is anticipated to occur after construction of the Proposed Action. This Federal Action would only occur if the previously executed transfer deed and grant of easement documents cannot be located.

Environmental Commitments

Fresno ID shall implement the environmental protection measures listed in Table 2 of EA-15-062 to avoid and/or reduce environmental consequences associated with 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 Section 3.1 of EA-15-062, 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: aesthetics, agricultural resources, environmental justice, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous waste, Indian Sacred Sites, Indian Trust Assets, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation and traffic, or utilities and services.

Air Quality

As shown in Table 3 of EA-15-062, temporary and short term emissions related to construction and operation of the Project would not produce criteria air pollutants in excess of San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District thresholds, and would not result in a substantial increase in long-term regional or local emissions. Therefore, construction-related emissions would not violate an air quality standard, contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation or conflict with or obstruct implementation of California Air Resources Board and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District air planning efforts. A general conformity determination pursuant to the Clean Air Act is not required.

Biological Resources

With the incorporation of environmental protective measures, listed in Table 2 of EA-15-062, federally listed, proposed or candidate species, and critical habitat protected under the

Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 USC § 1531 et seq.) would not be affected. Migratory birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA; 16 USC § 703-712) also would not be affected, as suitable habitat is absent from the Action area. Many of the special-species do not occur in the Proposed Action area because habitat types required by species protected by the ESA do not occur in the Action area. Designated critical habitat is also absent. The Proposed Action would not involve the conversion of any native habitat or land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. There would be no change in land use patterns of cultivated or fallowed fields that do have some value to listed species or to birds protected under the MBTA. Fresno ID's available water supplies would not reach streams containing listed fish species; therefore, there would be no effects to fish. Based upon the reasons described above, Reclamation has determined there would be No Effect to listed species or designated critical habitat under the ESA and No Take of birds protected by the MBTA. As such, no consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service is required.

Cultural Resources

Reclamation determined that there will be no adverse effect to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.5(b) and entered into consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in May 2016, seeking their concurrence. A response from SHPO was received on July 6, 2016 (see Appendix C in EA-15-062).

Global Climate Change

The Proposed Action would involve minimal short-term impacts consisting of emissions during construction. Carbon dioxide emissions were estimated to be 0.0934 tons per year (see Appendix B in EA-15-062). There are no long-term operational emissions as the number of trips for maintenance (maximum of two trips a day) are within those currently used for canal maintenance. No additional trips are required for the Project. Construction and operation under the Proposed Action/Proposed Project would result in below *de minimis* impacts to the global climate.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a connection to convey water from Fresno ID's Gould Canal to the Friant-Kern Canal. The Proposed Action would increase water supply reliability, enhance operational flexibility, and reduce system constraints by providing a mechanism for water transfer between the Kings River and Friant-Kern Canal Systems. Additionally the Proposed Action would establish a mechanism for drought and dry year supply capacity for Reclamation's CVP Friant Division contractors, including addressing critical water supply needs of disadvantaged communities along the Friant system that are dependent on this system as their sole water supply. The Proposed Action would facilitate the potential transfer or exchange of recaptured CVP Friant Division water supplies with Kings River water supplies to support the recirculation element of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program.

Kings River water originates as snow in the Kings River watershed, and is generally of very high quality. Water quality data from 2013 for Kings River water introduced into the Friant-Kern Canal under Fresno ID's existing 5-year Warren Act Contract are included in Table 6 and Table 7 in EA-15-062. Organic samples associated with Title 22 (California Domestic Water Standards) were also analyzed during the 2013 water quality testing and none were detected. As shown in Tables 6 and 7 in EA-15-062, primary and secondary constituents under Title 22 were

either non-detect or well below the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs). Reclamation expects that any future introductions of Kings River water under the Proposed Action would be similar. In addition, Reclamation requires annual sampling of non-Project water prior to introduction into its facilities to be sure it meets Reclamation's then-current water quality requirements prior to introduction.

Currently, water from the Kings River is treated and used for direct human consumption by two cities within Fresno ID's service area. Kings River water supplies conveyed to other contractors would be used to meet existing demand, including municipal demand for drinking water. Because this water is of high quality and would be tested to ensure water quality criteria compliance, this delivery would not result in any violations of existing water quality standards or substantial water quality changes that would adversely affect beneficial uses.

Water previously banked within Fresno ID's groundwater bank(s) would be made available to users within Fresno ID under existing contracts. Fresno ID operates its groundwater banks so that 10 percent of the banked water is left behind for recharge to avoid land subsidence and groundwater quality issues. Water delivered from the Gould Canal to other contractors would minimize the need for those contractors to pump their local groundwater supplies. Because the Proposed Action/Project would operate within Fresno ID's standard operating criteria established for the banking facilities, groundwater levels would not be depleted, and local groundwater wells would continue to support existing permitted uses. The depletion of groundwater in the areas receiving transferred or exchanged supplies would be minimized.

The intent of this Proposed Action is to in part promote conjunctive water management and groundwater storage. The Proposed Action furthers Fresno ID's commitment to conjunctive water management by optimizing the use of limited surface water supplies, makes more water available for intentional groundwater recharge projects, and improves surface water operating efficiencies. The Proposed Action would have beneficial impacts to water resources.

Land Use and Planning

Construction of Fresno ID's pump station facility would not change existing land uses. Under the Proposed Action, construction of the facility would not require the removal of any agriculture and no new lands would be brought into agricultural production. Although the northern portion of this site is listed under the Williamson Act and is classified as either Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, the construction of water facilities is considered to be a compatible agricultural use and would not change its land use designation. By exchange or transfer, water would be diverted through the proposed facility for delivery to CVP Friant Division contractors for existing agricultural and municipal purposes. Consequently, the Proposed Action would maintain current land uses and would have no adverse impacts to land use.

Noise

Under the Proposed Action, operation of the facilities would generate some minimal noise from the pumps; and Proposed Action construction activities would involve temporary noise sources that is anticipated to last between four to five months. During the construction phases of the Proposed Action, noise from construction activities would contribute to the noise environment in

the immediate Proposed Action vicinity. Activities involved in construction would not generate significant noise levels to the area.

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.

Air Quality

Emissions for the Proposed Action are well below the *de minimis* thresholds established by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and would not have a cumulatively adverse impact on air quality.

Biological Resources

As described in Section 3.1.4 in EA-15-062, the Proposed Action is incorporating protective measures (Table 1 of EA-15-062) that would avoid effects to federally listed, proposed or candidate species, and critical habitat protected under the ESA as well as migratory birds protected under the MBTA. In addition, the Proposed Action would be subject to regulatory constraints imposed pursuant to the ESA, regardless of whether those constraints exist today. Consequently, there would be no cumulative impacts as a result of the Proposed Action.

Cultural Resources

Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action would not result in impacts to cultural resources; therefore, there would be no cumulative impacts.

Global Climate Change

Although greenhouse gas emissions are considered cumulatively significant, the estimated annual carbon dioxide emissions required to install and operate the proposed facility is well below the 25,000 metric tons per year threshold for reporting greenhouse gas. As a result, the Proposed Action would not contribute to cumulative adverse impacts to global climate change.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Reclamation has reviewed existing or foreseeable projects in the same geographic area that could affect or could be affected by the Proposed Action. Since 1995, Reclamation has prepared environmental reviews for 77 short-term and long-term water transfers, exchanges, and Warren Act contracts (introductions of non-Project water into federal facilities) within the Friant-Kern Canal. 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.

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. Reclamation requires annual sampling of non-Project water prior to introduction into its facilities to be sure it meets Reclamation's then-current water quality requirements prior to introduction in order to prevent substantial degradation of water supplies. As shown in Tables 6 and 7 of EA-15-062, Kings River water is of high quality and would not contribute to degradation of water supplies in the Friant-Kern Canal. Reclamation expects that any future introductions of Kings River water under the Proposed Action would be similar. Should water quality change over the life of the Project, Reclamation would not allow introductions until water quality criteria are met.

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.

The Proposed Action/Project would not interfere with water deliveries, facility operation, or cause substantial adverse changes to the conveyance facilities. The Proposed Action/Project would not trigger other water service actions and does not contribute to cumulative effects to physical resources when added to other water service actions. The Proposed Action/Project would have beneficial impacts on water resources and public health; and therefore would not contribute to adverse cumulative impacts on these resources areas.

Land Use and Planning

In recent years, land use changes within the San Joaquin Valley have involved the urbanization of agricultural lands. These types of changes are typically driven by economic pressures and are as likely to occur with or without the Proposed Action. Accordingly, no cumulative adverse impacts to land use are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Action.