

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Exchange with Friant Division Contractors for up to 10,000 Acre- Feet of Water in Millerton Lake for Water in San Luis Reservoir

FONSI-16-031



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.

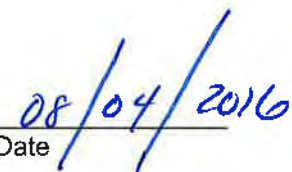
The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

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

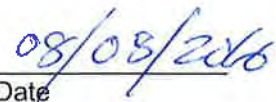
FONSI-16-031

**Exchange with Friant Division
Contractors for up to 10,000 Acre-Feet of
Water in Millerton Lake for Water in San
Luis Reservoir**


Prepared by: Rain L. Emerson
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist


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 10,000 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)-16-031, *Exchange with Friant Division Contractors for up to 10,000 Acre-Feet of Water in Millerton Lake for Water in San Luis Reservoir*, 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.

San Luis Reservoir is a 2 million acre-foot off stream, pumped-storage reservoir jointly owned and operated Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) as part of the CVP and State Water Project (SWP), respectively. Starting in April, the CVP and SWP draw on water previously stored in San Luis Reservoir to supplement Delta exports and meet south-of-Delta demands, including those of the Exchange Contractors. However, during the summer months conditions at San Luis Reservoir promote the growth of reservoir-wide algae, when the reservoir reaches the lower water surface elevations (referred to as "low point"). The low point issue arises when water levels fall below 300 thousand acre-feet (TAF), creating algae blooms that affect water quality and south-of-Delta water deliveries. As of July 25, 2016, San Luis Reservoir storage was approximately 204 TAF (Reclamation 2016).

In order to prevent operational impacts to south-of-Delta contractors, including the Exchange Contractors, Friant Division Contractors have proposed to exchange up to 10,000 acre-feet of their available CVP water supplies currently within Millerton Lake for a like amount of water at a future time in San Luis Reservoir.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to exchange up to 10,000 acre-feet of Friant Division Contractors' available CVP water supplies currently located in Millerton Lake. This water would be delivered to the Exchange Contractors at the Mendota Pool via the San Joaquin River to meet contract obligations. Reclamation will then return a like amount of CVP water to the Friant Division Contractors that participated in the exchange in San Luis Reservoir as soon as possible but no later than the end of February 2017.

Environmental Commitments

Reclamation, participating Friant Division Contractors, and the Exchange Contractors shall implement the environmental protection measures included in Table 1 of EA-16-031. 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-16-031, 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 10,000 acre-feet of Friant Division Contractors' available CVP water supplies currently located in Millerton Lake for a like amount of CVP water in San Luis Reservoir as soon as possible but no later than the end of February 2017. Friant Division Contractors' CVP water would be released from Millerton Lake to the San Joaquin River for delivery to the Exchange Contractors at the Mendota Pool to meet Reclamation's contractual obligations.

Water proposed for return to those Friant Division Contractors that participated in the Proposed Action would be scheduled in advance with Reclamation and would be acquired pursuant to Reclamation's water rights permits. No additional pumping in the Delta beyond what is

authorized would be needed to complete the 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.

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

The Proposed Action would have a beneficial effect on water supply during this critically dry year.

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.

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

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.