

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT, 16-20-MP

## Central California Irrigation District Molasses Ditch Lining Project

Mid-Pacific Regional Office, Sacramento, California

Prepared by:

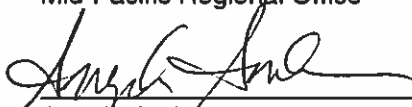


Date:

1-23-17

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation

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## **Mission Statements**

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to Indian Tribes and our commitments to 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.

## Background

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to provide a \$300,000 grant through the WaterSMART: Water and Energy Efficiency Grant Program to the Central California Irrigation District (CCID) for its Molasses Ditch Lining Project (Project). Reclamation prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA Number 16-20-MP) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior regulations (43 CFR Part 46) to consider potential impacts of providing grant funding to CCID. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by EA Number 16-20-MP, which is attached and incorporated by reference. Project actions were available online for public review and comment prior to consideration from November 7, 2016 through November 22, 2016.

## Alternatives Including Proposed Action

### No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not contribute financial funding in the amount of \$300,000 to the CCID Central for the project and Molasses Ditch would continue to lose water to seepage.

### Proposed Action

Reclamation would contribute \$300,000 to the CCID's Project through the WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant Program. The CCID would provide the remaining funding to implement the Project. The Project entails the clearing, engineering, and lining of a two-mile portion of Molasses Ditch to reduce seepage and increase transfer efficiency. Along with cleaning out the existing canal, CCID also proposes to replace culverts and headworks, and rebuild the earthen ditch to a properly sized facility with a concrete lining to eliminate seepage losses. The project is expected to result in an annual water savings of 476 acre-feet, and would encourage local growers to upgrade to high-efficiency irrigation systems through improved water tracking abilities.

## Comments Received

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) provided comments regarding the potential presence of giant garter snakes (snake; *Thamnophis gigas*) and potential use of Molasses Ditch as habitat for the snake. The Service agreed that the potential to encounter snakes is low, but recommended that Reclamation initiate informal consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The Service provided two examples of Grant Projects where Reclamation completed informal consultation as support for revising our determination. The two examples provided by the Service are CCID Regulating Reservoirs Project, File No. 2014-I-0595, and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, New Wells Project

– Region 4, File No. 2010-I-0715). In these two examples Reclamation determined that the project may affect, but was not likely to adversely affect giant garter snakes. In each instance Reclamation determined that suitable habitat existed near the project. For project No. 2014-I-0595 suitable habitat was located within 200 feet of the action, and for project No. 2010-I-0715 the project was situated at a State Wildlife Refuge with suitable habitat. Neither of these examples is comparative to the current project, and no additional information suggesting suitable habitat exists within, or near the existing project was provided. Reclamation has therefore not revised its determination that the project will have no effect to listed species. Additional supporting text was added to the biological resources section of the attached EA to further clarify the reasons suitable habitat is absent.

## Findings

In accordance with NEPA, Reclamation determined that providing grant funding to CCID to implement the Proposed Action is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment; consequently, an environmental impact statement is not required.

The following reasons are why the impacts from the proposed action are not significant:

1. The proposed action will not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).
2. The proposed action will not significantly affect natural resources and unique geographical characteristics such as proximity to historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation, and refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order (EO) 11990); flood plains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3) and 43 CFR 46.215(b)).
3. There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).
4. The proposed action will not have possible effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).
5. The proposed action will neither establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).
6. The proposed action will not have cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).
7. The proposed action will not significantly affect historic properties (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).

8. The proposed action will not significantly affect listed or proposed threatened or endangered species, or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).
9. The proposed action will not threaten a violation of Federal, State, tribal or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).
10. The proposed action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993).
11. Implementing the proposed action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities (EO 12898).
12. The proposed action will not limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007 and 512 DM 3).