

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Draft FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

San Joaquin Municipal Utility District – Poso Creek Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

FONSI-16-036



Mission Statements

The Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors 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-16-036

**San Joaquin Municipal Utility District –
Poso Creek Integrated Regional Water
Management Plan**

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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 addition of Southern San Joaquin Municipal Utility District (Southern San Joaquin MUD) to the streamlined approval process for the Poso Creek Regional Water Management Group. This draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA)-16-036, *San Joaquin Municipal Utility District – Poso Creek Integrated Regional Water Management Plan*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

No final decision shall be made on the FONSI until public review has been completed and comments, if any, considered.

Background

In 2009, Reclamation analyzed a 25-year approval process for the annual transfer, exchange, and/or banking of up to 195,000 acre-feet (AF) of available CVP water supplies in Environmental Assessment (EA)-09-121 (Reclamation 2012). EA-09-121 also analyzed the return of up to 65,000 AF per year of banked or exchanged water within federal facilities. Based on specific environmental commitments required for the project, including water quality requirements for returned water, Reclamation determined that the project would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and a Findings of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued on May 9, 2012. Both EA and FONSI (Reclamation 2012) are hereby incorporated by reference.

Southern San Joaquin MUD is a Central Valley Project contractor located within the Poso Creek Region. In order to address water supply needs during water management challenges, like the recent drought, Southern San Joaquin MUD joined the Poso Creek Regional Water Management Group and has requested authorization from Reclamation to participate in streamlined approval process that was analyzed in EA-09-121.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to include Southern San Joaquin MUD in the Poso Creek Water Management Group approval process. Specific project details are included in Section 2.2 of EA-16-036.

Environmental Commitments

Southern San Joaquin MUD shall implement the environmental protection measures listed in Table 1 of EA-16-036 to reduce environmental consequences associated with the Proposed

Action. Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

Table 1 Environmental Protection Measures

Resource	Environmental Commitments
Water Resources	The water would be used for beneficial purposes and in accordance with Federal Reclamation law and guidelines as applicable.
Water Resources	No water would be used outside of the currently authorized place of use.
Various Resources	No land conversions would occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

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-16-036, 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, and Indian Trust Assets.

Biological Resources

Under the Proposed Action, there would be no construction, no changes in pumping in the Delta, and water would only be used to support existing land uses. Under the Proposed Action, there would be no construction, no changes in the Delta, and water would only be used to support existing land uses. There is no critical habitat in the Proposed Action Area. The San Joaquin kit fox and any migrating birds could continue to use the Proposed Action Area as under the No Action alternative.

Water Resources

Under the Proposed Action, Southern San Joaquin MUD would be able to exchange and transfer CVP water supplies under the Poso Creek IRWMP. Southern San Joaquin MUD would, also, be able to bank CVP water for future use. The Proposed Action would have a beneficial effect on the Southern San Joaquin MUD available water supplies and would provide greater flexibility in their water management actions.

The Proposed Action would allow Southern San Joaquin MUD to have greater long term flexibility in their water management actions long-term, use existing water supplies in a timely manner, and provide overall all better management of their water supply. This would provide a beneficial impact to water supplies within the District.

The Proposed Action 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 adverse impacts to existing facilities or other contractors.

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.

Biological Resources

As the Proposed Action would not impact any federally listed species or migratory birds, it would not contribute cumulatively toward any impacts to those resources.

Water Resources

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 dry years.

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 would request various water service actions, such as banking, transfers, and exchanges whether or not the Proposed Action is authorized. Each water service transaction involving Reclamation undergoes environmental review prior to approval.

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The Proposed Action 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 adverse impacts to existing facilities or other contractors.