



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Categorical Exclusion Checklist

Arvin-Edison Water Storage District's Forrest Frick Pipeline East Side Canal Intertie Project CEC-21-007

prepared by

Shelly Ruiz
Natural Resources Management Trainee
South-Central California Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation

concurred by

Susan Bierer
Architectural Historian
Interior Region 10 · California – Great Basin
Bureau of Reclamation
Concurrence with Extraordinary Circumstance 8

concurred by

Ned Gruenhagen, Ph.D.
Wildlife Biologist
South-Central California Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation

concurred by

Rain L. Emerson
Environmental Compliance Branch Chief
South-Central California Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation
Concurrence with Extraordinary Circumstance 11

approved by

for

Michael P. Jackson, P.E.
Area Manager
South-Central California Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation

Proposed Action

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to award Arvin-Edison Water Storage District \$500,000 through a Fiscal Year 2021 WaterSMART Drought Response Program: Drought Resiliency Project grant, which would cover approximately half of the needed \$1,006,980.00 for their proposed Forrest Frick Pipeline and East Side Canal Intertie Project (Project).

The Project will be owned, operated, and maintained by Arvin-Edison Water Storage District and would allow water supplies to be conveyed into the Kern Delta Water District's East Side Canal. The Project would have access to Friant and Westside Central Valley Project (CVP), State Water Project (SWP), and Kern River flows via Arvin-Edison Water Storage District's existing Intake Canal and Forrest Frick Pumping Plant. Once the Project is constructed, other water transfers/exchanges from the same sources are anticipated which would increase the average annual benefit. The Project will allow for delivery of water to: 1) temporary surface water contracts to Arvin-Edison Water Storage District growers, 2) joint Arvin-Edison Water Storage District/Kern Delta Water District Sunset Groundwater Recharge Facility, 3) Kern Delta Water District growers, and 4) Kern Delta Water District recharge facilities.

The Project would entail construction of an intertie pipeline from the existing Forrest Frick Pipeline to the Kern Delta Water District's East Side Canal, specifically, where the Forrest Frick Pipeline crosses beneath the East Side Canal at Forrest Frick Pipeline Manhole #2. The proposed intertie pipeline will commence at Forrest Frick Pipeline Manhole #2, pass through various new valves, fittings, a flow meter, and terminate into a canal outlet structure in the west bank of the East Side Canal (Figure 1). Construction would occur after the 2022 water season and is estimated to last approximately 4 months, from August through December 2022.

The Project would require the reconstruction and minor alteration of the Forrest Frick Pipeline and East Side Canal. The proposed intertie will include approximately 75 feet of pipeline, pipeline appurtenances, and a reinforced concrete outlet structure in the west bank of the East Side Canal. The outlet structure will be approximately 22 feet long and 6 feet wide by 9.5 feet deep and be comprised of approximately 20 cubic yards of reinforced concrete. The East Side Canal will be reinforced with erosion control improvements. The entire Project is within an approximately 7,500 square feet area (0.16 acres) and less than 500 cubic yards of earthwork activities (i.e. excavation, backfilling, and compaction) will be required; approximately 200 cubic yards of surplus soil will be recompacted onsite to widen the outer canal banks and provide additional pipeline cover. It is anticipated that six permanent steel protection posts will be placed at six-foot spacing alongside the pipeline to protect maintenance vehicles from driving over the pipeline. The actuated valve, flow meter, water level sensors, and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system will be powered by a new overhead electrical service distributed by PG&E. Project electrical components include a service pole, meter, conduit, wires, panel backboard, control panel, cables, raceways, data logger, radio, antenna, grounding system, and other miscellaneous electrical components mounted to the panel backboard such as a convenience power outlet or maintenance light.

Once construction is complete, Arvin-Edison Water Storage District will program and remotely monitor the Project electrical components with their existing SCADA software.

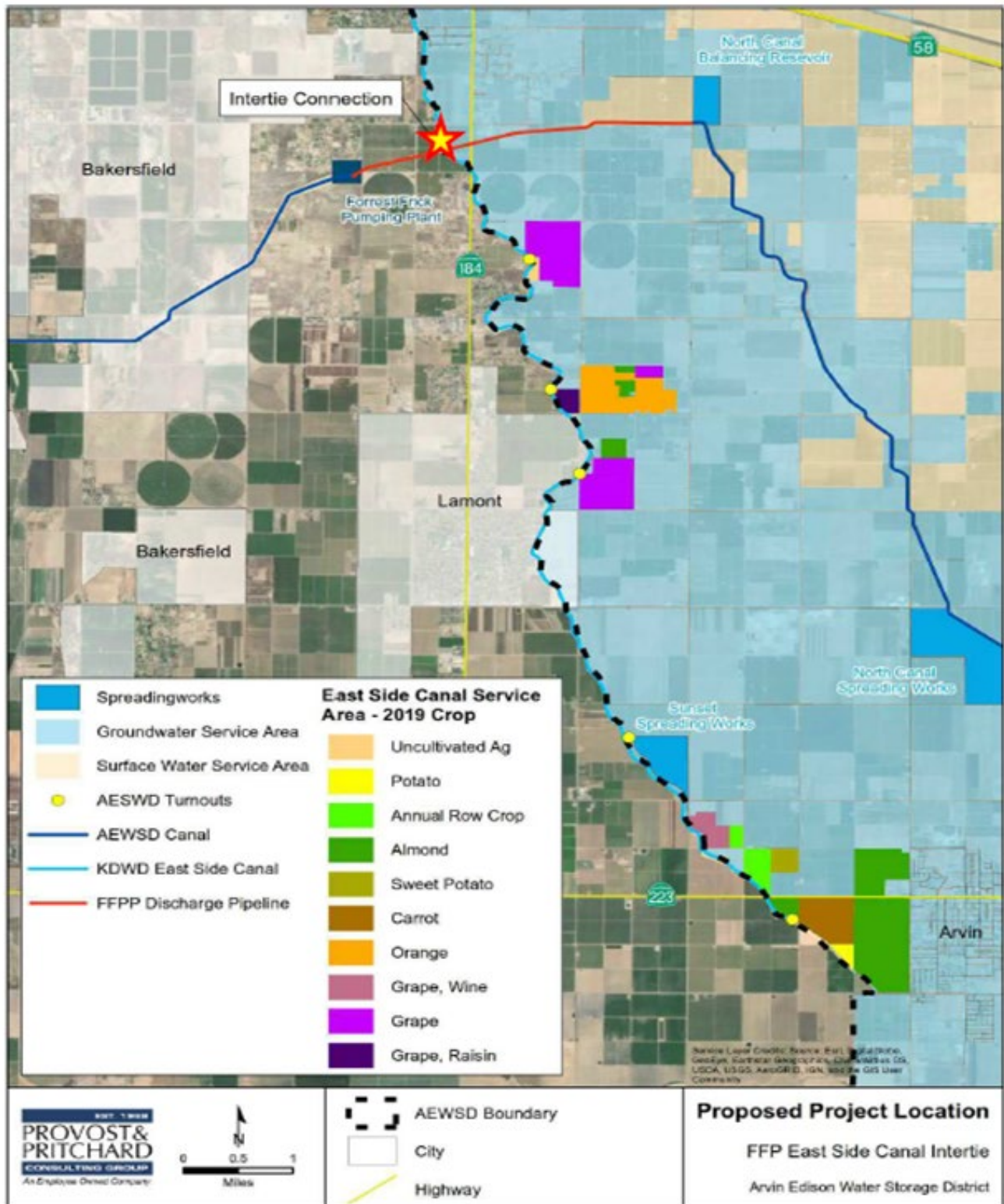


Figure 1. Proposed Project

Environmental Commitments

Arvin-Edison Water Storage District shall implement the following environmental protection measures to avoid environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action:

- Water deliveries facilitated by installation of this intertie shall not be used to convert native lands or those untilled for 3 or more years, or contribute to alteration or destruction of habitat for federally listed species, including designated critical habitat, unless the effects of such actions have been evaluated and consulted upon with the appropriate regulatory agencies (e.g., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Entities operating or using the intertie facilities in a manner that would potentially lead to effects on listed species or their critical habitat shall be responsible for consulting under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA, 16 U.S.C. §1531 *et seq.*) of 1973, as amended, and meeting legal requirements provided for therein.
- Construction shall be completed during daylight hours (i.e., from ½ hour prior to sunrise to ½ hour after sunset).
- The speed limit for vehicles in the Project area shall be a maximum of 20 MPH.
- Prior to any ground disturbing activities (e.g., before installation or maintenance of pipelines, erecting postings, etc.), a pre-activity survey listed species, including for San Joaquin kit fox (SJKF, *Vulpes macrotis mutica*) shall be conducted of the Project area by a qualified biologist. Survey(s) shall be conducted no fewer than 14 days and no more than 30 days prior to the onset of any ground disturbing activity.
- A written 1-page profile of SJKF showing images of SJKF, and describing their protected status under the ESA, habitat requirements, and general behavior shall be provided by the biologist to all project workers prior to the start of construction.
- A written report of the pre-activity survey(s) findings shall be transmitted to Reclamation so that they are received within five days after survey completion and prior to the start of ground disturbing activities.
- If an active SJKF den is found during survey(s), guidance shall be sought from Reclamation biological staff to determine if consultation with Service is needed before the action may proceed. Dens shall not be destroyed. It may be permissible to place exclusion zones around known and potential dens which occur outside the project footprint.
- To prevent inadvertent entrapment of kit foxes or other animals during the construction phase of a project, all excavated, steep-walled trenches or holes more than 2-feet deep shall be covered at the close of each working day by plywood or similar materials. If the trenches cannot be covered or closed, one or more escape ramps constructed of earthen-fill or wooden planks shall be installed. Ramps shall have a slope no steeper than 1:1 and be placed at a rate of at least one for each 50-foot length of trench or hole. If at any time a SJKF is discovered on-site, work shall be stopped until the fox has left the area volitionally. If the SJKF is unable to, or does not leave volitionally Reclamation (559-262-0300), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (559-243-4005) shall be contacted for guidance.
- All pipes 4-inch diameter or greater or similar open-ended tubular materials stored overnight in the Project area shall be stored with openings covered or with the bottom of openings placed at least 36 inches above ground level.

- Before pipe is moved and before holes or trenches are filled, they should be thoroughly inspected for animals, allowing animals to leave of their own volition before Project activities are initiated or resumed.
- Avifauna nest from February through August. If Project activities are to be conducted during this period, a qualified biologist shall conduct a commonly accepted pre-activity survey for nesting birds in the Project area and immediate vicinity. If nesting birds are present, including burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*), the biologist shall identify and demarcate an appropriate buffer area for this or other species or identify another method that would avoid take. Nesting areas so identified shall be avoided during Project activities or until the biologist determines that no take would occur from Project activities.
- Burrowing owls use burrows year-round, often using burrows along canals, not just during the nesting season. To protect them, if ground disturbing Project activities are to occur outside the breeding period, a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-activity survey for burrowing owls at the Project area and immediate vicinity. If burrowing owls occupy burrows or other structural features that would be destroyed or it is not practicable to avoid these areas in order to avoid take, then Reclamation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and/or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall be consulted for appropriate action to conduct prior to Project activities. Duly authorized personnel may passively relocate non-breeding burrowing owls from burrows that would be destroyed following accepted protocols (e.g., employing 1-way excluders at burrows until it is determined that they have relocated).

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

Exclusion Category

43 CFR 46.210 (c): Routine financial transactions including such things as salaries and expenses, procurement contracts (e.g., in accordance with applicable procedures and Executive Orders for sustainable or green procurement), guarantees, financial assistance, income transfers, audits, fees, bonds, and royalties.

Extraordinary Circumstances

Below is documentation that Reclamation considered whether there were extraordinary circumstances associated with the action as required in 40 CFR 1508.4. The criteria reflect the Extraordinary Circumstances detailed in 43 CFR 46.215, the requirements of Executive Orders, and Reclamation policy on Indian Trust Assets.

Extraordinary Circumstance	Yes, No, or Uncertain
(1) This action would have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1502.3)	No
(2) This action would have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA Section 102(2)(E) and 43 CFR 46.215(c)).	No

Extraordinary Circumstance	Yes, No, or Uncertain
(3) This action would have significant impacts on public health or safety (43 CFR 46.215(a)).	No
(4) This action would have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographical characteristics as 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 (EO 11990); flood plains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (43 CFR 46.215 (b)).	No
(5) This action would have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks (43 CFR 46.215(d)).	No
(6) This action would establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (e)).	No
(7) This action would have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (f)).	No
(8) This action would have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by Reclamation (LND 02-01) (43 CFR 46.215 (g)).	No
(9) This action would have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species (43 CFR 46.215 (h)).	No
(10) This action would violate a Federal, tribal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for protection of the environment (43 CFR 46.215 (i)).	No
(11) This action would affect ITAs (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993).	No
(12) This action would have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898) (43 CFR 46.215 (j)).	No
(13) This action would limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007, 43 CFR 46.215 (k), and 512 DM 3)).	No
(14) This action would contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act, EO 13112, and 43 CFR 46.215 (l)).	No

NEPA Action Recommended

This action is covered by the exclusion category and no extraordinary circumstances exist. The action is excluded from further documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.