UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

MID-PACIFIC REGION

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Pelger Mutual Water Company Groundwater Production Element Project & Sutter Mutual Water Company Groundwater Monitoring Project – Sacramento Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Program Grant

FONSI 11-13-MP

Recommended by:

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RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

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BACKGROUND

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the *Pelger Mutual Water Company Groundwater Production Element Project & Sutter Mutual Water Company Groundwater Monitoring Project – Sacramento Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Program Grant*, dated September 2011.

Under the Sacramento Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Program (SVIWRMP) Grants Program, Reclamation provides financial assistance to support activities that promote the preparation and revision of written regional water management/conservation plans, implement activities identified in written water management plans, demonstrate new or previously unknown water management technologies and practices, and promote improved understanding of good water use practices and principles. Reclamation is providing financial assistance to the Pelger Mutual Water Company (PMWC) and Sutter Mutual Water Company (SMWC) for SVIRWMP revision and implementation. PMWC's and SMWC's Groundwater Production Element Project (Proposed Project) includes the installation of one groundwater well to supplement existing surface water and groundwater supplies (PMWC) and one groundwater monitoring well (SMWC). The Proposed Project would improve the flexibility and reliability of PMWC's and SMWC's water supply, particularly during dry and critically dry water years.

FINDINGS

In accordance with NEPA, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of Reclamation has found that the Proposed Project is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Consequently, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding of no significant impact is based on the following:

1. Surface Water Resources

Construction **-** Effects on surface water quality could occur during the construction phase of the Proposed Project because of stockpile erosion and spoil piles. Prior to construction activities, the contractor would develop and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to reduce sediment discharged from the site. Implementing the SWPPP, in conjunction with the use of best management practices, would reduce potential impacts on surface water quality, thus resulting in no significant impacts to surface water resources from construction activities.

Operation **-** No streams are located within the area of forecast incremental drawdown of one foot or greater in the shallow aquifer; however, because the Sacramento River is the largest stream in the Sacramento Valley Groundwater Basin, forecast stream effects are compared with available measured streamflow data. The peak reduction of streamflow in the Sacramento River that could occur because of the Proposed Project would represent a very small percentage (less than 0.5 percent) of the total streamflow and would have no significant effect on surface water within the project area. The proposed SMWC groundwater monitoring well would have no operational effects on surface water.

2. Groundwater Resources

Construction - No impacts on local groundwater levels are anticipated as part of the well drilling and installation process.

Operation **-** Incremental drawdown, resulting from project implementation in the regional aquifer, is forecast to be no more than approximately 11 feet by the end of the pumping season, with an incremental drawdown typically not exceeding five to 10 feet in most areas. The maximum incremental drawdown of 11 feet is forecast at 0.25 mile from the proposed well. This incremental drawdown is forecast to dissipate to approximately 3.5 feet within one mile of the well. This magnitude of incremental drawdown would not affect groundwater levels such that yields of pre-existing nearby wells would decrease to a rate that would not support existing land uses. Additionally, groundwater elevations would return to pre-project levels, because the subbasin would refill each spring, with the possible exception of multi-year droughts. Forecast incremental drawdown in the shallow aquifer would not exceed five feet and would have no adverse effects on shallow aquifer drawdown. The proposed SMWC monitoring well would have no operational effects on groundwater, land subsidence, or groundwater quality.

3. Land Use/Agricultural Resources

Construction **-** There would be no impacts on land use resulting from the construction of the Proposed Project. The proposed well locations are unoccupied and currently in use for agricultural purposes. No other projects are anticipated at these locations within the near future, so construction would not hinder the existing or planned use of the sites.

Operation **-** Operation of the Proposed Project would have no effects on land use. The Proposed Project would be implemented to support existing agricultural land uses, which would be a beneficial effect.

4. Biological Resources

Construction – The proposed well locations are in highly compacted and disturbed areas. There are agricultural drainages, irrigation canals, wetlands and a narrow riparian band in the vicinity of the Proposed Project area that are considered suitable aquatic habitats that could support giant garter snake (GGS). GGS is unlikely to be within the immediate area where construction will occur for the PMWC and SMWC wells; however, they could be found within the adjacent canals or nearby wetland/riparian areas. Although these areas could be used as migratory corridors, construction will occur during the snake's inactive period (after mid-October). Implementing measures specified in the EA/IS and Biological Assessment would reduce the overall impact such that no adverse effect on GGS would occur.

Adherence to the proposed avoidance and minimization measures in the EA/IS would protect migratory bird species that could be affected by the project and would reduce the impact such that no adverse effect on nesting birds would occur.

Operation – No effects on biological resources as a result of operational activities associated with this project.

5. Cultural Resources

The Proposed Project is the type of activity that has the potential to affect historic properties. A records search, a cultural resources survey, and Tribal consultation identified historic properties within the Area of Potential Affect. All project activities will not adversely affect historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.5(b). Constructing the proposed production and monitoring wells and connecting the PMWC production well discharge pipeline to the PMWC Lateral SL-17S will not diminish its structural integrity and will not adversely impact the historic characteristics that make the canal eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and B. The function of the canal will not change. Since no historic properties would be adversely affected, no cultural resources would be impacted as a result of implementing the Proposed Project. Concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office to conclude the Section 106 compliance process is pending.

6. Indian Trust Assets

There would be no impacts on Indian Trust Assets because there are none in the Proposed Project area.

7. Environmental Justice

Construction **-** Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project would require a local or regional contractor, who would likely employ local or regional workers. If workers were temporarily relocated into the area during the construction phase, the construction effort would likely result in local revenue for lodging, food, and construction-related materials and equipment. Construction-related environmental justice effects are expected to be positive; no significant impacts would occur.

Operation **-** Implementing the Proposed Project would increase water supply reliability resulting in beneficial effects on agricultural production-related employment. Project-related environmental justice effects are expected to be positive; no significant impacts would occur.

8. Air Quality

Construction **-** The short-term increase in emissions during construction would not have a significant impact on air quality because construction would generate minimal emissions and incremental emissions would be less than federal and state standards.

Operation **-** Operation of the proposed PMWC well would require electricity to operate the pump and would not generate onsite emissions. The proposed SMWC well would be used for monitoring so there would be no operational features. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not have a significant effect on air quality.

9. Climate Change

Construction - Construction of the Proposed Project would result in a minor, short-term increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (total of approximately 50 metric tons of CO_2). There would be no significant long-term impacts to climate change as a result of the Proposed Project.

Operation - Operation of the Proposed Project is not expected to generate additional indirect GHGs, associated with the electricity used to operate the pump, to the extent that they would cause an adverse impact. Emissions from electricity use are considered indirect emissions; the Proposed Project would not include a direct GHG emissions source, such as an onsite stationary source. The proposed SMWC well would be used for monitoring, so there would be no operational features.

10. Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Project.