

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

MID-PACIFIC REGION

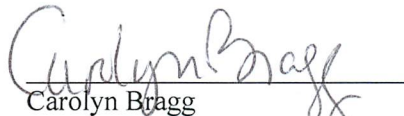
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Firebaugh Canal Water District 1st Lift Canal Lining Project

FONSI 11-14-MP

Recommended by:


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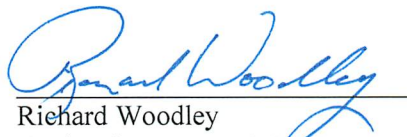
Date: 09/29/11

Concurred by:


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Date: Sept. 29, 2011

Approved by:


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Regional Resources Manager
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: Sept. 29, 2011



RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Firebaugh Canal Water District 1st Lift Canal Lining Project

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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 *Firebaugh Canal Water District 1st Canal Lining Project*, dated September 2011.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is for Reclamation to further the goals and objectives of the WaterSMART program as they apply to water management operations in the Firebaugh Canal Water District (FCWD). Reclamation intends to do so by providing grant funding for the lining of approximately 2.6 miles of existing earthen channel with a concrete liner to reduce seepage losses. In addition, the grant funding will be used to upgrade an existing pump station which would increase flowrate flexibility resulting in improved flow measurement accuracy.

FINDINGS

In accordance with NEPA, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of Reclamation has found that the Proposed Action 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 and Groundwater Resources

The Proposed Project would conserve approximately 300 acre feet of water per year (a reduction of an estimated 45 pounds of selenium, 4,000 pounds of boron, and 1,000 tons of salt each year). The estimated conserved amount equates to 4.5 percent of the water conveyed by the 1st Lift Canal and 0.4 percent of the FCWD's total annual water supply. The Proposed Project would also reduce suspended silt and aquatic growth in the canal which would increase the quality of the water delivered to water users. The increase in water quality would reduce wear on the pump stations as well as the number of backwash cycles of filter stations. In addition, the proposed modifications to Pump Station 107 would improve water delivery flexibility by converting the existing fixed-speed pump to a variable speed, which would allow FCWD to set the flow rate to more closely match actual demands. The Proposed Action would not result in short-term or long-term adverse impacts to surface water or resources dependent on surface water.

2. Groundwater Resources

The Proposed Action would line approximately 2.6 miles of existing earthen channel with concrete. Currently the unlined canal loses approximately 300 acre feet per year through seepage to a perched saline sink amounting to 4.5 percent of the water conveyed by the 1st Lift Canal and 0.4 percent of the FCWD's total annual water supply. The reduction in the amount of seepage to the local perched water table would reduce the production of subsurface drain water which is currently discharged to

the San Joaquin River and eventually to San Joaquin/Sacramento Delta. The Proposed Action would not result in short-term or long-term adverse impacts to groundwater resources.

3. Biological Resources

All work associated with the Proposed Action would be performed within the footprint of the existing canal and no habitat would be impacted. Lands surrounding the Proposed Action are either actively farmed or contain farm support facilities (such as shops and farm houses). The Proposed Action area is annually excavated, graded, and sprayed for maintenance purposes resulting in the absence of sufficient habitat criteria required to support special-status species. Though occurrences of neither sensitive species nor their associated habitats have been observed during the implementation of previous projects within the FCWD area, the Proposed Action area could potentially be a migratory corridor and as such, an analysis of potential impacts and associated avoidance measures for both giant garter snake and San Joaquin kit fox are discussed in the EA. Avoidance and minimization measures as described in the EA would be implemented by FCWD to further avoid and minimize any potential project impacts to giant garter snake and San Joaquin kit fox. Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action would have no effect on either species.

4. Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action has no potential to cause effects to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1). Because the Proposed Action has no potential to cause effects to historic properties, the project will have no impact on cultural resources. In the unlikely event that cultural resources or human remains are identified during the implementation of this project there may be additional considerations pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA. If inadvertent discoveries of cultural resources or human remains occur during project implementation, work shall temporarily stop and Reclamation cultural resources staff shall be contacted immediately.

5. Indian Trust Assets

There are no Indian reservations, rancherias or allotments in the project area (the nearest ITA is Table Mountain Rancheria, approximately 46 miles northeast of the project location). The Proposed Action does not have a potential to affect ITAs.

6. Environmental Justice

No significant changes in agricultural communities or practices would result from the Proposed Action, other than potential changes to individual irrigation systems. These changes are not likely to affect agricultural employment, which employs a higher proportion of low-income and minority workers than are employed in the general workforce. In fact, the use of more sprinkler or drip irrigation system may ensure the continued viability of agriculture in the area, which would sustain agricultural employment. Accordingly, the Proposed Action would not have any significant or disproportionately negative impact on low-income or minority individuals within the project area.

7. Climate Change

The Proposed Action would generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from construction activities, mainly through the combustion of fuels by construction equipment and vehicles. These emissions would be temporary, and would cease once construction work is completed. In addition, California's Low Carbon Fuel Standard would lead to the use of fuels that would generate fewer GHG emissions. The Proposed Action would not generate a significant amount of GHGs, and therefore would not result in an adverse impact on global climate change.

8. Cumulative Impacts

Currently, there are no other known foreseeable development projects located in the vicinity of the Proposed Action area. Project operations would not be altered due to the Proposed Action and therefore would not contribute to any long-term effects on environmental resources. The Proposed Action would not result in cumulative impacts to any of the resources described within the EA.