

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Westlands Water District Coalinga Canal Turnout Project (Milepost 11.58)

FONSI-11-053

Recommended by:

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Introduction

Westlands Water District (WWD) covers almost 950 square miles of prime farmland in western Fresno and Kings Counties. Currently, WWD's district boundaries encompass 604,000 acres with an irrigable acreage of 567,800 acres. WWD has an existing license from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to operate the turnout at Coalinga Canal Milepost (MP) 11.58R to deliver water to its agricultural customer at this location, California Pistachios LLC, which operates a pistachio farm at this site.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to replace components of the 35 year old diversion system at Coalinga Canal MP 11.58R which draws water from the canal for conveyance to California Pistachios LLC. WWD has determined that the existing system can no longer provide a stable water supply to its customer.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to approve the removal and replacement of an existing water diversion structure on the Coalinga Canal at Milepost 11.58R. Removal would consist of excavating an open trench to remove the existing 18 inch pipe on the WWD (diverter) side and within the existing operations and maintenance (O&M) road. The existing pressure tank would also be removed. However, the existing 150 horsepower turbine pump/motor/column and electrical connections would remain intact and would be connected to a new 18 inch polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe. The new pipe would then cross the maintenance road (approximately 87 inches wide) underground to connect to two flange connections in Reclamation's Coalinga Canal Right of Way. During the replacement, several minor refurbishments would also be made, including the installation of a new concrete slab and a new 6 inch thick concrete wall with rebar (metal reinforcement bar) around the new pipe, concrete encasement of the new pipe under the O&M road, and a new 16 inch above-ground metering station with associated piping.

The open trench required for excavation would be backfilled and compacted once construction is complete. Any materials in excess of backfill needs would be hauled offsite or spread and compacted onsite.

Equipment that would be used for construction includes the following: case 580 backhoe concrete mixing truck and rammer dirt compactor. Construction would require approximately 30 working days to complete.

Table 1: Environmental Protection Measures

Resource	Protection Measure
Water Quality	During construction hazardous materials such as fuel, oil and paint may be on site. WWD and its contractor would be required to comply with all Federal, state and local laws, during and after construction pertaining to the use, storage, transportation and disposal of any hazardous material.
Biological Resources	1. Between 14 and 30 days prior to the start of construction, a qualified biologist approved by the Service and DFG will conduct a pre-construction survey for San Joaquin kit foxes as specified in Service (2011). 2. All known and potential San Joaquin kit fox dens within the construction zone or kit fox dens outside the construction zone if otherwise authorized, shall be excavated pursuant to conditions described below prior to the onset of construction activities or otherwise protected as specified by Service. Hand excavation of known kit fox dens shall not occur until appropriate consultations are completed. Prior to excavation Reclamation shall notify Service and DFG of the intent to destroy the subject den or burrow(s) and the reasons why alternate courses of action are not possible. It is understood the Service may concur or recommend alternate methods to reduce impacts to the den or burrow(s). 3. As determined by a qualified biologist the destruction of a potential kit fox den may proceed without notification if no current or previous use of the den by kit foxes is known. However, if during excavation any potential den is determined to be a currently or previously used kit fox den (e.g., if kit fox sign is found inside), DFG and Service will be notified immediately of the change in status. 4. In the event that DFG and Service concurs that a known San Joaquin kit fox den would be unavoidably destroyed by planned project action, the following procedures shall be implemented: 5. Prior to construction, the subject den shall be carefully excavated using hand tools. Excavation will be performed by either a qualified biologist or under the direct supervision of a biologist to ensure that no animals are trapped or injured. Any kit foxes in residence shall be allowed to escape unimpeded. 6. The den shall be completely excavated and then refilled and compacted to prevent future use of the site by resident animals. 7. Documentation of the den loss shall be conveyed in writing to the Service, Sacramento Field Office, and to DFG in Fresno. 8. A qualified biologist will be on-site or on-call during all activities that could result in the take of a blunt-nosed leopard lizard or San Joaquin kit fox. The qualifications of the biologist(s) will be presented to the Service for review and approval prior to any groundbreaking at the project site. The biologist will have oversight over implementation of all measures described in the <i>Terms and Conditions</i> of the biological opinion issued for this project and if any of the requirements associated with these measures are not being fulfilled he/she will have the authority to stop project activities through communication with the Project Manager,. If the biologist(s) exercises this authority, the Service and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) will be notified by telephone and electronic mail within one (1) working day. The Service contact is Mr. Daniel Russell, Division Chief, Endangered Species Program, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, Sacramento (telephone [916] 414-6600). The DFG contact is the State Dispatch at (916) 654-4262. 9. Prior to initiation of any on-site preparation/construction activities, the Service-approved biologist will conduct an education and training session for all available individuals who will be involved in the site preparation or construction, including the project representative(s) responsible for reporting take to the Service and the DFG. Training sessions will be required for all new or additional personnel before they are allowed to access the project site. Attendance sheets identifying attendees and the contractor/company they represent will be provided to the Service with the post-construction compliance report. At a minimum, the training will include a description of the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, San Joaquin kit fox, and their habitat requirements. Additional information will include the general measures, as they relate to the project, that are being implemented to conserve the species; the penalties for non-compliance with these measures; travel within the marked project site will be restricted to established roadbeds and the boundaries (work area) within which the project must be accomplished. To ensure that employees and contractors understand their roles and responsibilities, training may have to be conducted in languages other than English. 10. The limits of the construction area will be flagged, if not already marked by other fencing, and all activity will be confined within the marked area. All access to and from the project area will be clearly marked in the field with appropriate flagging and signs. Prior to commencing construction activities, the contractor will determine construction vehicle parking sites and all access routes. All construction activity will be confined within the project site, which may include temporary

	access roads, haul roads, and staging areas specifically designated and marked for these purposes. At no time will equipment or personnel be allowed to adversely affect habitat areas outside the project site without authorization from the Service. 11. To the extent possible, nighttime construction must be minimized. 12. Permanent and temporary disturbances to habitats of the blunt-nosed leopard lizard and San Joaquin kit will be minimized to the maximum extent practicable. To minimize temporary disturbances, all project-related vehicle traffic will be restricted to established roads and other designated areas. These areas also would be included in pre-construction surveys and, to the maximum extent possible, would be established in locations disturbed by previous activities to prevent further adverse effects. 13. A 20-mile per hour speed limit will be required on unpaved roads within listed species habitats. 14. To prevent harassment, injury or mortality of blunt-nosed leopard lizards, San Joaquin kit foxes, or destruction of their burrows or dens no pets of any kind will be permitted on construction sites. 15. The onsite biological monitor will check for animals under all vehicles and equipment such as stored pipes before the start of work each morning. 16. To prevent inadvertent entrapment of blunt-nosed leopard lizards or San Joaquin kit foxes during the construction phase of the linear facilities, all excavated, steep-walled holes or trenches more than two feet deep shall be covered at the close of each working day by plywood or similar materials or provided with one or more escape ramps (with no greater than a 3:1 slope) constructed of earth fill or wooden planks. Before such holes or trenches are filled, they shall be thoroughly inspected for trapped animals by a qualified biologist. If a blunt-nosed leopard lizard or San Joaquin kit fox is trapped, then it shall be allowed to escape on its own. In addition, all construction pipe, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of 7.6 centimeters (3 inches) or greater that are stored at the construction site for one or more overnight periods will be thoroughly inspected for listed animals before the pipe is subsequently moved, buried, or capped. If during inspection one of these animals is discovered inside a pipe that section of pipe shall not be moved until the animal has escaped on its own. If at any time a trapped listed animal is discovered, the on-site biologist will immediately place escape ramps or other appropriate structures to allow the animal to escape from the opening, or will contact the Service and/or DFG by telephone for guidance. The Service will be notified of the incident by telephone and electronic mail within one (1) working day. 17. All equipment will be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's directions so there will be no leaks of fluids such as gasoline, oils, or solvents. 18. To eliminate an attraction to predators, all food-related trash items such as wrappers, cans, bottles, and food scraps will be disposed of in closed containers; these containers will be removed at least once every day from the entire project site. 19. Use of rodenticides and herbicides in project areas should be restricted. This is necessary to prevent primary or secondary poisoning of kit foxes and the depletion of prey populations on which they depend. All uses of such compounds should observe label and other restrictions mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and other State and Federal legislation, as well as additional project-related restrictions deemed necessary by the Service. If rodent control must be conducted, zinc phosphide should be used because of a proven lower risk to kit fox.
Cultural Resources	In the 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.

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:

Findings

Water Resources

Under the Proposed Action there would be no increase in design flow or changes to diversion. Replacement of the pipe, pressure tank and other improvements would enhance the reliability of

the water service by WWD to its customer, California Pistachios LLC and any subsequent customers at MP 11.58R.

There would be no permanent impacts to water resources as all potential impacts are construction related and therefore temporary. All potential adverse impacts would be avoided through compliance with all applicable laws related to hazardous materials. As such, there would be no cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Action.

Land Use

Under the Proposed Action, the existing land use would be temporarily disturbed during construction, as these activities would prevent the immediate area from being used. However, the site would be restored to pre-construction conditions and would continue to be used for agriculture-related uses.

The Proposed Action, through its replacement of the existing aged water conveyance system with an updated system, would contribute to stability of the existing agricultural uses; therefore, there would be no direct or cumulative adverse impacts to land use.

Biological Resources

There would be no permanent impact to the habitat of any listed species however two listed species, the Blunt-nosed leopard lizard and San Joaquin kit fox could be impacted by construction activities.

If present, individual blunt-nosed leopard lizards within the temporary and permanent footprint of the site could be killed, injured or harassed by construction activities. These impacts could be greater due to fact that the project may well take place outside of the May 1st to August 1st timeframe. Activities that take place outside of this timeframe pose a greater risk because at least part of the population is underground and therefore more vulnerable to injury. The incorporated minimization measures would reduce the extent of these effects.

A total of 0.23 acres of potential kit fox habitat would be temporarily impacted. If the preconstruction survey finds that no kit foxes are currently using the action area, then only foraging habitat would be impacted. If a den is found to be present, it would not be collapsed unless it is shown to be vacant. This would nonetheless result in harm to the species, however, by making certain the den was empty, injury or death would be prevented.

The proposed action may adversely affect the blunt-nosed leopard lizard and San Joaquin kit fox; however, the environmental protection measures would avoid and minimize these adverse effects. In addition, cumulative effects are expected to be relatively small in magnitude, due to the Federal ownership of most of the action area. The impacts would be temporary in nature, as the project is replacing existing, aged infrastructure.

Air Quality

Emission modeling was completed to determine air quality impacts (EA-11-053). All pollutants resulting from construction fall below the de minimis thresholds set by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Post-construction emissions would be from the maintenance vehicles (i.e. trucks and non-heavy equipment) used by WWD personnel to monitor or operate

the distribution system during the irrigation season, on an as-needed basis. Due to the reduced maintenance needs of the new equipment, post-construction emissions would be expected to be less than pre-construction levels. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not cause adverse effects to air quality.

Global Climate

The construction phase of the Proposed Action would result in the direct emissions of Greenhouse gases (GHGs) through the use of petroleum fuels. These emissions would not continue past the Proposed Action completion date. The total CO₂e 143.1 lbs (0.14 tons total) is far below the 75,000 tons per year threshold for significant GHG emissions. As such, this would not result in a substantial change in GHG emissions, and there would be no adverse effect.