
1. PURPOSE AND NEED

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NEED

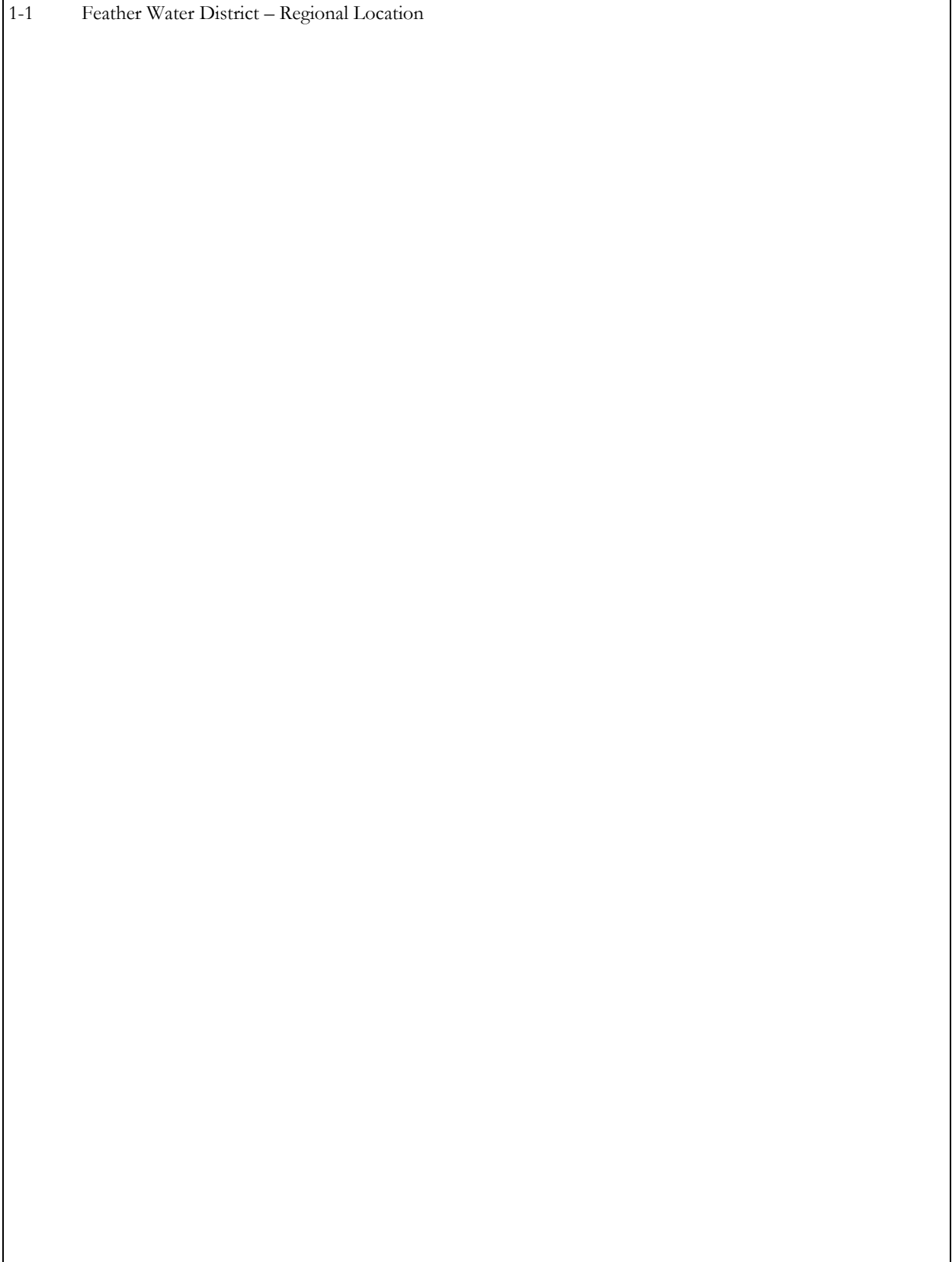
1.1 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Section 3404(c) of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to renew the long-term water service contract with the Feather Water District (District) in Sutter County, California, for a period of 25 years. The District currently receives water under an interim contract that will expire on February 28, 2006. By renewing the long-term contract in 2004, Reclamation would continue delivering Central Valley Project (CVP) water to the District for 25 years, from March 01, 2005, through February 28, 2029 (the location of the District is shown in Figure 1-1). Two alternatives that would accomplish the purpose and need of the proposed action, as well as a no action alternative, are evaluated in this environmental assessment (EA).

The Feather Water District is in the Sacramento Valley, approximately 25 miles north of Sacramento and eight miles south of Yuba City. The District encompasses approximately 9,300 acres, including roads, ditches, levees, and farm buildings. It also includes riparian land between the District and the Feather River and wetlands (Gilsizer Slough) between the District and the dredged portion of Gilsizer Slough, whose water flows into the Sutter Bypass. Return flows from the District are recycled, with any leakage draining into the Sutter Bypass, and do not affect the Feather River (Figure 1-2).

An annual average of approximately 7,550 acres is in agricultural production, with approximately 7,300 acres being irrigated with water from the CVP. The District contracts for delivery of 20,000 acre-feet (a-f) per year of CVP water for agriculture. Historically, no water has been delivered to the District for municipal or industrial use, but the District may receive deliveries from the CVP of “other water” (water not used for crops or livestock, as defined in the contract) at prices identical to those established for municipal and industrial uses.

1-1 Feather Water District – Regional Location



1-2 Feather Water District Service Area

The Feather Water District receives water from Oroville Dam via the lower Feather River, which is below Oroville Reservoir and is regulated by Oroville Dam, Thermalito Diversion Dam, and Thermalito Afterbay Outlet. Under normal operations, most of the Feather River flow is diverted at Thermalito Diversion Dam into Thermalito Forebay. The remainder of the flow, typically 600 cubic feet per second (cfs), flows through the historical river channel, the “low-flow channel.” Water released by the forebay is used to generate power before being discharged into Thermalito Afterbay. Water is returned to the Feather River through Thermalito Afterbay Outlet, then it flows southward through the valley to the confluence with the Sacramento River at Verona, approximately 72 miles downstream of Oroville Dam. From June to September, when the District diverts water from the Feather River, enough CVP water from Shasta dam is delivered (by exchange) in the Sacramento River at the confluence with the Feather River to supply the prior rights of the Sacramento River and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta users.

Water delivered to the District from Oroville Dam into the lower Feather River flows into two channels. Here, the water is lifted via a southern pump station at the end of Wilkie Avenue and a northern pump station east of the Garden Highway near Messick Road in Yuba City (Figure 1-2). The southern pump station is approximately 12.5 miles upstream of the Sacramento River. The northern pump station is approximately 17 miles upstream. Both pump stations are in dredged embayments at the ends of channels. The southern pump station is in a dredged embayment that is 200 feet long, 50 feet wide and approximately 45 feet deep. The southern pump station contains 4 (60hp) pumps with 4 unscreened intakes that are 18” in diameter with a lift of approximately 45 feet. The northern pump station is in a dredged embayment that is 480 feet long, 320 feet wide and approximately 5 feet deep. At the end of the northern channel is a small side channel which is 96 feet wide that holds 4 (18”) unscreened intakes and 4 (100 hp) pumps, with a lift of approximately 45 feet.. Both areas are perpendicular to the Feather River. The District distributes available water equally among water users, based on acreage and reclaims all surface flow runoff (e.g., tail water) and pumps it back into the system for redistribution.

Reclamation has prepared this EA to determine if renewing the District’s long-term contract would result in any site-specific significant impacts on the natural or human environment. This EA has been prepared pursuant to and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 USC § 4321-4370d), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations on implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Reclamation’s NEPA handbook (Bureau of Reclamation 1990).

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The CVPIA, Title XXXIV of the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-575), amended the previous authorizations of the CVP to include fish and wildlife protection, restoration, and mitigation as project purposes having equal priority with irrigation and domestic uses, and fish and wildlife enhancement as a project purpose equal to power generation. Section 3404(c) of the CVPIA directs the Secretary of the Interior to:

“ . . . upon request, renew any existing long-term repayment or water service contract for the delivery of water for a period of 25 years and may renew such contracts for successive periods of up to 25 years each . . . (after) appropriate environmental review, including preparation of the environmental impact statement required in section 3409”

Section 3409 of the CVPIA required the Secretary to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) to evaluate the direct and indirect impacts and benefits of implementing the CVPIA. Reclamation and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), a co-lead for the PEIS, released the final PEIS in October 1999 (Reclamation 1999a). This EA tiers off the PEIS to evaluate potential site-specific environmental impacts of renewing the Feather Water District’s long-term water service contract.

The purpose of this project is to renew the Feather Water District water service contract, consistent with the provisions of CVPIA. The project alternatives will include the terms and conditions of the contracts and tiered water pricing.

Long-term contract renewal (LTCR) is needed to:

- Continue beneficial use of water, developed and managed as part of the CVP, with a reasonable balance among competing demands, including the needs of irrigation and domestic uses; fish and wildlife protection, restoration, and mitigation; fish and wildlife enhancement; power generation; recreation; and other water uses consistent with requirements imposed by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and the CVPIA;
- Incorporate certain administrative conditions into the renewed contract to ensure CVP continued compliance with current federal reclamation law and other applicable statutes; and
- Allow the continued reimbursement to the federal government for costs related to CVP construction and operation.

The area of analysis for this EA is the Feather Water District (Figure 1-2) and land in the vicinity of the District that may be affected by the proposed action. The analysis for this EA was conducted for projected conditions in 2026, the initially proposed 25-year contract renewal period. Because the process was delayed and the current proposed 25-year contract renewal period now ends in 2029, the analysis was revisited to review the economic effects resulting from the extension of the renewal period. Such basic assumptions as land use and cropping patterns were determined to have not changed, because the future conditions were assumed at full delivery, so the results have also not changed. The analysis that was originally completed applies to the current proposed contract period of 2029.

1.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

On October 15, 1998, Reclamation published a notice of intent (NOI) in the Federal Register to announce the preparation of environmental documents for long-term renewal of CVP water service contracts. Interested parties were encouraged to attend scoping meetings and informational workshops to comment on the environmental documents. Scoping meetings were held at eight locations throughout the CVP service area. Reclamation prepared a scoping report, documenting the process, in April 1999 (Reclamation 1999b).

The Draft EA was circulated for public and agency review for 30 days. This public comment period provided an opportunity for the public to review the issues addressed in the impact analysis and to offer comments on any aspect of the process. Comments on the Draft EA have been responded to and appropriate revisions were made in the Revised Draft EA. The Draft EA was revised and recirculated for public comment for a 30-day period in September 2003, and again in July 2004 following negotiation of the draft contract and finalization of the Biological Assessment.

1.4 RELATED ACTIVITIES

There are several activities being implemented by Reclamation as part of the obligation to manage and operate the CVP. The following discussion identifies these activities and describes their relation to the renewal of the Feather Water District water service contracts. Related studies and projects that have been conducted recently or are currently being completed are summarized in Table 1-1.

**Table 1-1
Related Activities**

Project or Study and Lead Agency	Summary
Long-Term Contract Renewal of Other Existing CVP Water Service Contracts – Reclamation	Reclamation is in negotiation with other CVP water contractors for renewal of long-term contracts.
CALFED Bay-Delta Program – CALFED	Established in May 1995, the consortium of federal and state agencies is charged with the development of a long-term solution to the Delta water concerns. CALFED is completing an EIR/EIS as part of this process. Renewal of Long-Term CVP Contracts is assumed within the CALFED EIR/EIS.
Coordinated Operating Agreement (COA) and Operations Criteria and Plan (OCAP) Update – US Bureau of Reclamation and California Department of Water Resources	Provisions and requirements of the CVPIA, SWRCB Order 1641, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, and other agency mandates require that the existing operational roles and responsibilities of the State Water Project (SWP) and CVP be reviewed and updated to provide appropriate long-term operating criteria and procedures for the two primary water storage and delivery projects affecting waterways of the Central Valley.