

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

MID-PACIFIC REGION

SOUTH-CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

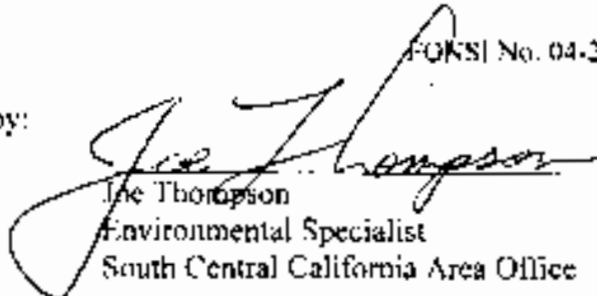
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Long-Term Contract Renewal
Delta Mendota Canal Unit

Central Valley Project
Sacramento, California

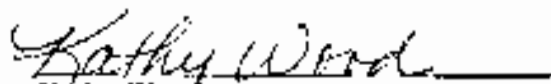
FGSI No. 04-23

Recommended by:


Joe Thompson
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2/24/05
Date

Concurred by:


Kathy Wood
Resource Management Division Chief
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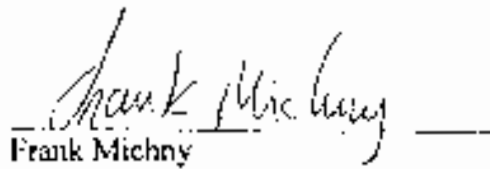
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2/25/05
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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE RENEWAL OF LONG-TERM CONTRACTS
FOR THE DELTA-MENDOTA CANAL UNIT CONTRACTORS**

INTRODUCTION

The Mid-Pacific Region of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has found that an environmental impact statement is not required for the proposed execution of the renewal of water service contracts for 18 water service contractors of the Delta-Mendota Canal Unit (DMCU) of the Central Valley Project (CVP). All of the districts receive CVP water for either agricultural purposes or for a combination of agricultural and Municipal and Industrial (M&I) purposes. The renewals for all 18 districts will be for 25 years and will start in March 2005 and extend through February 2030.

BACKGROUND

The Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) required completion of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and further stipulated that Reclamation must perform appropriate environmental review for renewal of long-term water service contracts. The PEIS programmatically evaluated the implementation of the CVPIA, including long term contract renewal. The PEIS was completed in 2000 and a Record of Decision was signed in January 2001. Reclamation initially prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in October 2000 to evaluate the potential beneficial and adverse environmental impacts associated with renewal of the long-term Delta-Mendota Canal Unit contracts. Three alternatives (including the No Action Alternative) were evaluated. Public and Agency comments on this draft were used to prepare a second draft EA which was also released to the public for a 30-day comment period in November, 2004. Public and agency comments received on the November 2004 draft EA were evaluated by Reclamation and used in the preparation of the attached final draft, completed in 2005, which includes thematic responses to the comments.

Reclamation completed the EA process to determine if renewing the contracts would result in site-specific significant impacts to the natural or human environment. The EA process was completed pursuant to and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 USC §4321-4370), the Council of Environmental Quality regulations on implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Reclamation Handbook (Bureau of Reclamation 1990).

The proposed action is the execution of separate long-term contracts between the United States and the following contractors of the DMCU:

- Broadview Water District
- Coehlo Family Trust
- Del Puerto Water District
- Eagle Field Water District
- Fresno Slough Water District
- James Irrigation District
- Laguna Water District
- Mercy Springs Water District (unassigned portion)
- Oro Loma Water District
- Banta Carbona Irrigation District
- Patterson Irrigation District
- Byron-Bethany Irrigation District
- Reclamation District No. 1606
- The West Side Irrigation District
- Tranquillity Irrigation District
- Tranquillity Public Utility District
- West Stanislaus Water District
- Widren Water District

Renewal of long-term contracts is needed to:

- Continue the beneficial use of water developed and managed as part of the CVP, with a reasonable balance among competing demands, including the needs of agricultural and municipal and industrial (M&I) users and the needs of fish, wildlife, recreation, and other water uses consistent with the requirements imposed by the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and CVPIA.
- Incorporate certain administrative conditions into the renewed contracts to ensure continued compliance with current Federal Reclamation law and other applicable statutes.
- Allow the continued reimbursement to the Federal government for costs related to the construction and operation of the CVP.

FINDINGS

In accordance with the NEPA, and its implementing regulations, and consistent with the environmental analysis of the EA for the Long-Term Contract Renewal for the Shasta and Trinity River Divisions, Reclamation finds that implementation of the proposed action will result in no significant impact to the quality of the human environment. The finding is supported by the following factors:

1. **Water Resources** – Renewal of the long-term water service contract will not change contract water quantities from the quantities in existing contracts and will therefore not cause any increased use. Therefore, there will be no effect on surface water supplies or quantity. For the same reason, renewal of the water service contract would not result in any growth-inducing impacts that will increase water demand during the contract's time frame.

2. **Land Use** -- The renewal of contracts will not provide for additional water supplies that could act as an incentive for the conversion of native habitat for increased acreage of agriculture production, municipal and industrial development, or other activities. The amount and types of crops will vary, as they have in the past, according to the annual water allocation and farming practices.
3. **Biological resources** -- The proposed long-term contract renewal would continue the deliveries of CVP water to the 17 contractors of the DMC Unit. No new facilities would be constructed.
4. **Threatened, Endangered Species** -- The proposed long-term contract renewal would continue the deliveries of CVP water to the contractors of the DMC Unit. It would not change or alter habitat use by or populations of species listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered that are known to occur or have the potential to occur in the DMC Unit service area. Reclamation has consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries. Results of these consultations were considered in finalizing the Draft Environmental Assessment and executing this Finding of No Significant Impact.
5. **Cultural Resources** -- The proposed action will not directly or indirectly cause ground-disturbing activities. Therefore there will be no impacts to cultural resources.
6. **Recreation Resources:** The proposed action will not cause changes in historic CVP operations that determine reservoir shortage or the amount or timing of water deliveries. Therefore no impacts to recreational resources are anticipated.
7. **Demographics and Environmental Justice:** Because the proposed action is essentially maintaining the status quo it will not have an adverse effect on human health or the environment, as defined by environmental justice policies and directives. The proposed action will not disproportionately affect any socio-economic or low-income groups. Renewal of the contracts maintains the socio-economic conditions in the area by providing water needed for agricultural and other enterprises, thus maintaining employment opportunities.
8. **Indian Trust Assets** -- Execution of the water service contract will not affect any Indian Trust Assets because there are no known Indian Trust Assets within the DMC Unit service area.
9. **Economic Resources:** Renewal will have limited socio-economic impact, even though costs will increase. M&I water users are relatively *price inelastic*; that is, they change their use of water relatively little in response to even fairly substantial changes in the price of water. Similarly, large scale farming operations are not expected to change relative to changes in water rates. Change of the threshold of a presumption of agricultural use from a 2- to a 5-acre minimum will not significantly affect farmers. Upon documentation of a farming operation, the smaller acreage would qualify for

agricultural rates. These economic changes do not result in any significant changes to the environment

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Information about the Final EA prepared for the proposed action or this FONSI may be obtained from Joe Thompson, Bureau of Reclamation, at 559-487-5179.