

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS,
SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY NATIONAL CEMETERY,
AND
U. S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
LONG-TERM WATER SERVICE CONTRACT RENEWAL**

**CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT
MERCED COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

FONSI No. 04-83

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BACKGROUND

In accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Region of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has found that the proposed renewal of the long-term water service contract with the Department of Veteran's Affairs will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not needed. The attached Environmental Assessment is hereby incorporated by reference and supports this Finding of No Significant Impact.

Reclamation proposes to renew a water service contract (3-07-20-W1124-LTR1) with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for the San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery (National Cemetery). The contract is for a total water supply of up to 850 acre-feet per year (af/y) in accordance with Section 3405 of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act. Currently no turnout exists on the CVP facilities to deliver the CVP water to the National Cemetery. However, a turnout exists on the State Water Project (SWP) facilities. This SWP turnout will serve a secondary purpose as a CVP turnout. No construction or modification of the CVP or SWP facilities would be required for this project.

The VA and the State Department of Water Resources (DWR) enter into a separate Wheeling Agreement to delineate the terms and conditions for the conveyance of this water. Reclamation also signs the Wheeling Agreement to delineate terms and conditions for exchanging CVP water if SWP water is used. The VA is the lead agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and DWR is responsible for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act for the Wheeling Agreement. Due to the relationship of the conveyance of CVP water through SWP facilities and the renewal of the contract, this EA and this FONSI includes analysis and findings of these two actions. The Proposed Action would facilitate conveyance of CVP water through the California Aqueduct to an existing SWP turnout, to which the National Cemetery is connected, and would then use it to take delivery of its CVP water for municipal and industrial (M&I) purposes.

FINDINGS

Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in no significant environmental impacts. This finding is supported by the following factors:

1. Water Resources. The Proposed Action includes an increase in contract supply of 400 af/y of CVP compared to past water service contracts with the VA. The CVPIA allows for up to 850 af/y and Reclamation began accounting and allocating the total 850 af/y of water for the VA. The full amount was included in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the CVPIA, as well as, the Operations Criteria and Plan Biological Assessment and Biological Opinions. This water would not interfere with deliveries to the Environmental Water

Account, refuges, CVP, or SWP contractors. The conveyance mechanism through the SWP Aqueduct would remain the same. This amount of water is insignificant relative to that diverted to the San Joaquin Valley and would not result in any significant impacts to water quality or quantity.

2. Biology/Endangered Species. Reclamation consulted under the Endangered Species Act for the Operations, Criteria and Plan (OCAP) for the operations of CVP and SWP water through the existing facilities, as well as, future actions and facilities. The OCAP included the full 850 af/y of water in this long-term contract. The timing of conveyance of an additional 400 af/y of water would not change significantly from historic conditions and is in conformance with existing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Biological Opinions addressing CVP and SWP operations. Thus, no significant impacts will occur to aquatic listed species addressed in the OCAP consultation.

Reclamation does not have authority over the operations, land use, or maintenance of the National Cemetery facilities managed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action will have no effect on listed terrestrial species.

3. Land Use. The Proposed Action includes no land use activities. Water would be used by the VA to operate the Veterans Cemetery. There would be no significant change in land uses and, thus, no significant effect on land use.
4. Cultural Resources. The Proposed Action and Wheeling Agreement would provide water in existing facilities and no new construction is required. Therefore, the project would not result in any impacts to cultural resources. Any impacts to the cemetery are under the discretionary control of the VA who is responsible for such actions.
5. Indian Trust Assets. Since water is conveyed in existing facilities and no Indian Trust Assets (ITA) exist within the project area, the Proposed Action Alternative will not affect ITAs.
6. Environmental Justice. The Proposed Action Alternative will not cause changes in employment. No disproportionate impacts to minority or low-income populations will occur.