

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Santa Clara Valley Water District's 2017 Pacheco Conduit Maintenance Project

FONSI-15-059



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
South-Central California Area Office

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Mission Statements

The Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
South-Central California Area Office, Fresno, California

FONSI-15-059

**Santa Clara Valley Water District's 2017
Pacheco Conduit Maintenance Project**

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Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for routine maintenance, rehabilitation, and factual condition assessment of the Pacheco Conduit, Santa Clara Conduit, and Santa Clara Tunnel and their appurtenances. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA)-15-059, *Santa Clara Valley Water District's 2017 Pacheco Conduit Maintenance Project*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Reclamation provided the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft FONSI and Draft EA between April 07, 2017 and April 21, 2017. No comments were received.

Background

The Pacheco Conduit, Santa Clara Conduit, and Santa Clara Tunnel are part of the Reclamation's San Felipe Division of the Central Valley Project (CVP) which supplies raw water to both the Santa Clara Valley Water District (Santa Clara or District) and San Benito County Water District. Santa Clara, pursuant to Operating Agreement (Contract No. 7-07-20-W0130A), operates and maintains (O&Ms) the Pacheco Conduit, Santa Clara Conduit, and Santa Clara Tunnel on Reclamation's behalf.

Routine maintenance, rehabilitation, and factual condition assessment of the facilities are necessary to ensure that the Pacheco Conduit, Santa Clara Conduit, and Santa Clara Tunnel and their appurtenances continue to transport water between the San Luis Reservoir and Santa Clara and San Benito Counties. The District has requested authorization from Reclamation to inspect, maintain, or rehabilitate the Pacheco Conduit, Santa Clara Conduit, and Santa Clara Tunnel.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to authorize the District's inspection, maintenance, or rehabilitation the Pacheco Conduit, Santa Clara Conduit, and Santa Clara Tunnel as described in section 2.2 of EA-15-055.

Environmental Commitments

As part of the Proposed Action, Santa Clara shall (1) implement best management practices (BMPs) included in Appendix C of EA-15-059, (2) adhere to all applicable Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan avoidance and minimization measures included in Appendix D of EA-15-059, and (3) comply with all requirements in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concurrence memorandum included as Appendix E of EA-15-059. Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

Findings

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:

Resources Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

As described in Table 2 of EA-15-059, Reclamation analyzed the affected environment and determined that the Proposed Action does not have the potential to cause direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects to the following resources: cultural resources, environmental justice, Indian Sacred Sites, Indian Trust Assets, land use, recreation, or socioeconomic resources.

Air Quality

The operation of construction machinery associated with the Proposed Action would result in short-term emissions of air pollutants. As shown in Table 3 of EA-15-059, construction emissions are estimated to be below the thresholds established by both Air Districts with jurisdiction over the Action area. In addition, once construction is complete, the pipelines would be operated in the same way as they have in the past. Therefore, no changes in operational emissions would occur as a result of the Proposed Action and there would be no significant impacts to air quality.

Biological Resources

The Proposed Action would result in the removal of 0.1 acres of woody chaparral vegetation at three locations in the project area to ensure safe access during maintenance activities. The removal of woody chaparral vegetation is being treated as a permanent impact of 0.1 acre of Northern Mixed Chaparral/Chamise Chaparral land cover for compliance with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan; this would impact unlisted migratory birds. There would be a temporary loss of 9.69 acres of San Joaquin kit fox foraging and denning habitat. This impact would be minimized and compensated by the District's compliance with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan.

No lethal take of Least Bell's Vireos would occur, as the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan requires pre-activity surveys and a buffer around riparian habitat that may be used by the vireos for nesting. If present, the vireos could still be subject to minor disturbance from noise and the presence of personnel involved in the proposed repairs. As specified by the measures required in the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan, some water would need to be drained at a discharge rate of 2-4 cubic feet per second, into the four creeks described in Section 3.3.1.

Potential impacts to steelhead and its critical habitat would be minimized by implementation of measures included in the NMFS concurrence memorandum, in which NMFS concluded that the proposed draining may affect, but was not likely to adversely affect both the species and its critical habitat. These measures would avoid or minimize impacts to the steelhead that might otherwise result from scouring, sedimentation, etc. that could damage eggs, damage the gills of fish, and possibly result in false attraction flows that could attract fish into an area to spawn, only to leave them stranded when the water recedes.

Global Climate Change

As shown in Table 3 of EA-15-059, annual construction and operational emissions of Carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e) are estimated to be 450.8 and 108.5 metric tons (2017 and 2018 respectively), well less than the EPA's 25,000 metric tons per year threshold for annually reporting greenhouse gases emissions. Accordingly, the Proposed Action would result in below *de minimis* impacts to global climate change.

Water Resources

The Pacheco Conduit, Santa Clara Conduit, and Santa Clara Tunnel would be out of service temporarily, during the dewatering and construction periods of the Proposed Action. Both water districts have alternative sources of water. In order to reduce the temporary disruption and inconvenience to water users, work requiring pipeline(s) shutdown would be scheduled for when demand is lower. As described in Section 2.2 of EA-15-059, best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented during construction in order to control erosion; prevent any potential impacts to local waterways; and to minimize ground saturation in the appurtenance work areas. In addition, the District will acquire all permits required for working in waterways and implement all necessary BMPs to avoid and/or minimize potential water quality impacts.

There may be temporary impacts to groundwater levels in areas of Santa Clara and San Benito County Water District that could shift to groundwater supplies during the 5-month duration of the Proposed Action. However, these impacts would be temporary and would be offset once the shift back to surface water supplies is made. Completion of the Proposed Action would ultimately provide both water district's customers with a more reliable source of water.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts result from incremental impacts of the Proposed Action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment.

Air Quality

Construction-related emissions are considered temporary, and do not exceed the Air District's thresholds of concern, so cumulative adverse effects would not occur. Since long-term operational emissions would be unchanged as a result of the Proposed Action, they also would not contribute to cumulative air quality impacts.

Biological Resources

Agricultural and urban development has historically resulted in loss and modification of habitat for Federally listed species in the Proposed Action Area. Current impacts that are expected to continue in the future include agricultural activities, such as mowing of an adjacent hay field and possible use of pesticides. Compliance with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan includes a requirement that the District compensate for habitat loss that would result from the Proposed Action. This, in conjunction with the minimization measures required, would reduce any cumulative contribution to biological resource impacts in the Proposed Action Area.

Global Climate Change

Greenhouse gas emissions generated by the Proposed Action are expected to be extremely small, as seen in Table 3 of EA-15-059. While any increase in greenhouse gases emissions would add to the global inventory of gases that would contribute to global climate change, the Proposed Action would result in potentially minimal to no increases in greenhouse gases emissions and a net increase in greenhouse gases emissions among the pool of greenhouse gases would not be detectable.

Water Resources

Temporary disruption in water service to the District and San Benito Water District's customers would occur during the Proposed Action; however, there would be cumulatively beneficial impacts over the long-term as water supply would be more reliable. Additionally, the completion of this Proposed Action, when combined with future operation and maintenance activities, would reduce the need to discharge large amounts of water prior to future maintenance activities.