

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

**Draft FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

## **Transfer Approvals for the Exchange of Water between Del Puerto Water District and Arvin- Edison Water Storage District**

**FONSI-16-033**



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

July 2017

## **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-16-033**

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and Arvin-Edison Water Storage District**

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Prepared by: Stacy L. Holt  
Natural Resources Specialist

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Concurred by: Lisa C. Buck  
Wildlife Biologist

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Date

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Concurred by: Rain L. Emerson  
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist

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Date

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Approved by: Michael P. Jackson, P.E.  
Area Manager

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Date



## 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 the exchange of up to 15,000 acre feet of Del Puerto Water District's (Del Puerto) Central Valley Project (CVP) water to Arvin-Edison Water Storage District for return at a mutually agreeable date. This draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA)-16-033, Transfer Approvals for the Exchange of Water between Del Puerto Water District and Arvin-Edison Water Storage District, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

No final decision shall be made on the FONSI until public review has been completed and comments, if any, considered.

## Background

Del Puerto Water District (Del Puerto) is a Central Valley Project (CVP) contractor located on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley, south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) (Figure 1). Del Puerto's water supplies have been reduced in recent years because of regulatory limitations and adverse hydrologic conditions. As a result, Del Puerto has acquired substantial quantities of water (CVP and non-CVP) in advance each year, which are currently stored in San Luis Reservoir. However, due to the current wet hydrologic year and high runoff from snowmelt, the San Luis Reservoir has filled and spilt. Del Puerto has requested authorization from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to transfer up to 15,000 acre-feet (AF) of its available water supplies currently located in San Luis Reservoir to Arvin-Edison Water Storage District (Arvin-Edison) for storage and later return.

In addition to the severity of the recent drought, Arvin-Edison has extracted more groundwater than could be recharged through precipitation and runoff. Arvin-Edison's access to CVP water supplies south of the Delta, including San Joaquin River Restoration Program's (SJRRP) recaptured/recirculated CVP water and Cross Valley Contractors' CVP water supply, enables Arvin-Edison to return Del Puerto's water supplies from the Delta when called upon.

## Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to approve the transfers of up to 15,000 AF of water between Del Puerto and Arvin-Edison for storage during the 2017 Contract Year and later return as described below.

### **Delivery of Water to ARVIN-EDISON**

Del Puerto's available water supplies (CVP and non-CVP) would be released from San Luis Reservoir and conveyed through the California Aqueduct/San Luis Canal to the Cross Valley Canal where it would be delivered to Arvin-Edison. Arvin-Edison would use the transferred water for direct recharge or to meet in-district demands to offset groundwater extraction.

Any use of State facilities will require coordination and approval by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Any use of the Cross Valley Canal will require coordination and approval by the Kern County Water Agency. All approvals will be provided to Reclamation prior to approval of the transfer.

### **Delivery of Water to DEL PUERTO**

Arvin-Edison would later return a like amount of CVP water to Del Puerto, less 3% for conveyance losses, if applicable, when requested by Del Puerto. The available water supplies would include SJRRP recaptured/recirculated CVP water and/or Cross Valley Contractors' South-of-Delta CVP water supplies acquired by Arvin-Edison. The CVP water would be delivered to Del Puerto at its existing turnouts off the Delta-Mendota Canal upstream of San Luis Reservoir.

No ground disturbance or modification of existing facilities would be needed in order to convey water under the Proposed Action. Conveyance of water from Arvin to the Exchange Districts and from the Exchange Districts to Arvin would involve existing facilities.

### **Environmental Commitments**

Del Puerto and Arvin-Edison shall implement the environmental protection measures listed in Table 1 of EA-16-033 to reduce environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action. 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-16-033, 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: air quality, cultural resources, environmental justice, global climate change, Indian Sacred Sites, Indian Trust Assets, land use, recreation, or socioeconomic resources.

### **Biological Resources**

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would approve the exchange of up to 15,000 AF of water between Del Puerto and Arvin-Edison. The water involved in the Proposed Action would be used on existing crops within Arvin-Edison and Del Puerto, and would not be used to convert natural lands, or lands which have been fallowed or untilled for three or more years. The land use patterns of cultivated or fallowed fields which have some value to listed species or birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act would also remain unchanged. The infrastructure required to carry out the Proposed Action is already in place and no ground disturbance, modification of facilities, or construction would occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

Because the Proposed Action would not involve any construction, changes in water diversions from natural waterways, or changes in land use, Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action would have No Effect to proposed or listed species or critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq.), and there would be No Take of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §703 et seq.).

### **Water Resources**

The Proposed Action would allow Del Puerto to transfer its CVP and non-CVP water supplies currently located in San Luis Reservoir to Arvin-Edison for storage and later return when needed. This would prevent potential loss of from the San Luis Reservoir and would enable Del Puerto to better manage its water supply.

As Del Puerto's CVP and non-CVP water supplies are currently held in San Luis Reservoir, no additional Delta pumping would be needed to facilitate this transfer. In addition, any return of water to Del Puerto from Arvin-Edison's transfer of SJRRP recirculated/recaptured water or Cross Valley CVP water would be from already allocated water supplies that would not require additional pumping from the Delta.

Del Puerto's transferred water would be used to directly recharge groundwater in Arvin-Edison or to offset groundwater extraction (delivered to landowners for irrigation in-lieu of extracting groundwater). This would increase recharge in an area that has extracted more groundwater than could be replaced due to the recent drought providing a beneficial effect to groundwater levels in the area.

At a later date, Arvin-Edison would transfer its available SJRRP recaptured/recirculated and/or acquired Cross Valley CVP water supplies to Del Puerto for return. Neither Del Puerto nor Arvin-Edison would experience a net gain or loss in their respective water supplies since the transfers between the districts would be "bucket for bucket" less minor conveyance losses, if applicable.

As the transferred water supplies would be from existing supplies, the Proposed Action would not alter CVP operations, water storage or release patterns from CVP facilities, or the maximum volume of water delivered to the contractors. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not interfere with Reclamation's obligation to deliver CVP water to other CVP contractors, or other environmental purposes. Finally, CVP water would be delivered through existing infrastructure and would not require additional construction or modification of facilities for delivery. Thus, there would be no impact to CVP operations, facilities, or water supplies.

### **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.

***Biological Resources***

Because the Proposed Action would not result in any direct or indirect impacts to federally listed species or critical habitat, it would not contribute cumulatively to any impacts on these resources.

***Water Resources***

Reclamation has reviewed existing or foreseeable projects in the same geographic area that could affect or could be affected by the Proposed Action since Reclamation and CVP contractors have been working on various drought-related and water management projects, including this one, in order to better manage limited water supplies due to variable hydrologic conditions and regulatory requirements. This and similar projects would have a cumulatively beneficial effect on water supply availability.

As in the past, hydrological conditions and other factors are likely to result in fluctuating water supplies which drive requests for water service actions. Water districts provide water to their customers based on available water supplies and timing, while attempting to minimize costs. Farmers irrigate and grow crops based on these conditions and factors, and a myriad of water service actions are approved and executed each year to facilitate water needs. It is likely that over the course of the Proposed Action, districts will request various water service actions, such as transfers, exchanges, and Warren Act contracts (conveyance of non-CVP water in CVP facilities). Each water service transaction involving Reclamation undergoes environmental review prior to approval.

The Proposed Action and other similar projects would not hinder the normal operations of the CVP and Reclamation's obligation to deliver water to its contractors or to local fish and wildlife habitat. Since the Proposed Action would not involve construction or modification of facilities, there would be no cumulative impacts to existing facilities or other contractors.