

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

Draft FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

## **Reclamation Approvals associated with the Arvin- Edison Water Storage District and Westside Mutual Water Company 10-year Exchange Program**

FONSI-17-005



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.





## 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 series of annual transfers over a 10 year period of available water supplies between of Arvin-Edison Water Storage District's (Arvin), Westside Mutual Water Company's (Westside), Westlands Water District, and the Exchange Districts associated with the contractors' exchange program. This draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA)-17-005, *Reclamation Approvals associated with the Arvin-Edison Water Storage District and Westside Mutual Water Company 10-year Exchange Program*, 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

In 2011, Reclamation analyzed the proposed 5-year annual exchange of up to 50,000 acre-feet (AF) of Arvin's Central Valley Project (CVP) water supplies with Westside, California State Water Project (SWP) and other water supplies in Environmental Assessment (EA)-11-039. Under the exchange program, Arvin's CVP water supplies are transferred to Westside for use on member lands as "exchange water", based on a 1 for 1 or "bucket for bucket" basis. Westside member lands include: Cawelo Water District (Cawelo), Kern-Tulare Water District (Kern-Tulare), North Kern Water Storage District (North-Kern), Wheeler Ridge Maricopa Water Storage District (Wheeler Ridge), Dudley Ridge Water Storage District (Dudley Ridge), Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Storage District (Rosedale-Rio Bravo), Semitropic Water Storage District (Semitropic), and Kern Water Bank. In exchange for Arvin's CVP water supplies, Westside would deliver up to 50,000 AF of its available water supplies to Arvin on a variable, as-needed basis. Westside's available water supplies delivered to Arvin include a combination of SWP water supply, CVP Section 215 water, Kern River water, and/or City of Bakersfield surplus Kern River water. Reclamation determined that the proposed 5-year exchange program would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and a FONSI was issued on October 12, 2011 (Reclamation 2011).

In 2012, Reclamation received a request from Westside to add member lands located in Westlands Water District (Westlands) to the existing exchange program. The additional points of delivery and additional water supplies from Westside member lands located in Westlands was the only change from the project analyzed in EA-11-039. The addition of members lands located in Westlands to the exchange program was analyzed in EA-12-030 and a FONSI was issued on July 9, 2013 (Reclamation 2013).

As the term of the five year exchange program has ended, Arvin, Westside, and Westlands have requested approval from Reclamation to extend the program another 10 years. Under this new 10-year program the following districts would also be included: Belridge Water Storage District (Belridge), Berrenda Mesa Water District (Berrenda Mesa), and Lost Hills Water District (Lost Hills). These three districts, including the districts that participated in the previous exchange program, are collectively referred to as the Exchange Districts (Figure 1).

## **Proposed Action**

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would approve a series of annual transfers over a 10 year period of available water supplies between Arvin, Westside, Westlands, and the Exchange Districts associated with the contractors' exchange program.

## **Environmental Commitments**

Reclamation, Arvin, Westlands, Westside, and the Exchange Districts must implement the environmental protection measures in Table of EA-17-005 to avoid and/or reduce environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action (Table 1).

## **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-17-005, 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, and Indian Trust Assets.

### **Biological Resources**

Under the Proposed Action there would be no construction and water would only be used to support existing land uses. There is no effect on critical habitat and the San Joaquin kit fox and any migrating birds could continue to use the Proposed Action Area as under the No Action alternative.

### **Water Resources**

Under the Proposed Action, Arvin, Westside, Westlands, and the Exchange Districts would be able to transfer CVP and SWP water supplies through a series of one for one exchanges. The Proposed Action would have a beneficial effect on Arvin, Westside, Westlands, and the Exchange Districts, as it would reduce possible water supply losses it and would provide greater flexibility in their water management actions.

The Proposed Action would allow Arvin, Westside, Westlands, and the Exchange Districts to have greater flexibility in their water management actions, use existing water supplies in a timely

manner, and provide overall all better management of their water supply. This would provide a beneficial impact to water supplies within all districts involved in the program.

The Proposed Action 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 adverse impacts to existing facilities or other contractors

### **Cumulative Impacts**

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

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 water supply exchanges. And as such, each water service transaction involving Reclamation would undergo environmental review prior to approval.

### **Biological Resources**

As the Proposed Action would not impact any federally listed species or migratory birds, it would not contribute cumulatively toward any impacts to those resources.

### **Water Resources**

The Proposed Action would allow Arvin, Westlands, Westside, and the Exchange Districts to have greater long term flexibility in their water management actions, use existing water supplies in a timely manner, and provide overall all better management of their water supply. This would provide a cumulatively beneficial impact to water supplies within the Districts