

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Finding of No Significant Impact

Natomas North Drainage Canal Lift Pump Station Project – Sutter County, CA

FONSI 17-04-NCAO

Prepared by:



Megan Simon
Natural Resources Specialist
Northern California Area Office

Date:

10/1/18

Concurred by:



Paul Zedonis
Environmental and Natural Resources
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist/
Division Manager
Northern California Area Office

Date:

10/1/18

Approved by:



Donald Bader
Area Manager
Northern California Area Office

Date:

10/1/2018



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1 Background

On behalf of the project partners and in accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, Jacobs Engineering prepared an Initial Study/Environmental Assessment (IS/EA) to analyze the potential for impacts associated with the construction and operation of a new tailwater recovery lift pump station with 120-cubic-foot-per-second capacity on the Sankey Canal near the North Drainage Canal (NDC) in Sutter County, CA (Project).

The intent of the Project is to allow the reuse of agricultural tailwater accumulated in the Reclamation District 1000 (RD 1000) drainage canal system. The Project is anticipated to result in a 4,000 acre-feet (AF) per year reduction in the water needs of users within the boundaries of Sacramento River Settlement Contractor Natomas Central Mutual Water Company (NCMWC), which would otherwise be discharged from the Sacramento River for irrigation purposes. By reducing the irrigation water demand, the Project would also reduce overall pumping lift requirements and provide associated energy savings.

Reclamation will provide funding for the Project through a WaterSMART Small-Scale Water Efficiency Program grant which establishes a 50/50 cost share agreement between Reclamation and the NCMWC to construct the lift pump station within their existing canal and access road (Proposed Action). Ultimately NCMWC will transfer responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the lift pump station to RD 1000.

Reclamation made the draft IS/EA for the Project available online for a 30-day public review from August 1 through 30, 2018. RD 1000, as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) partner, also made the Mitigated Negative Declaration proposal available through the State Clearinghouse process. No substantive comments on the content of the IS/EA were received; therefore, no changes were made in the finalization of the document. The Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project was signed on September 14, 2018.

2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

NCMWC has implemented several projects in efforts to conserve surface water used for irrigation purposes within its boundaries. The impacts analysis documented in the IS/EA therefore focused on potential impacts from the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

2.1 No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not provide a WaterSMART Small-Scale Water Efficiency Project grant for the NDC Lift Pump Station Project. If NCMWC could not secure alternative funding, the new tailwater recovery lift pump station would not be constructed in the foreseeable future, if at all. As a result, the water savings anticipated to occur as a result of the Project would be delayed or would not be realized. Likewise, Project impacts requiring mitigation would not occur.

2.2 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would release the grant funding for the Project, which includes the following construction elements:

- Cast-in-place (or precast) reinforced concrete wet well and pump base slab, including pumps and motors, control cabinet, and electrical transformer
- Cast-in-place reinforced concrete intake and trash rake with four intake pipes to the lift pump station wet well
- Approximately 270 linear feet of buried electrical conduit, and;
- Discharge pipe from the pumps through the Sankey Canal bank with cast-in-place concrete discharge structure and riprap slope protection

The most significant disturbance would be for the intake, intake piping, and pump structure, which would require excavation to a depth of approximately 14 feet, but limited to an area of approximately 0.11 acre. The remaining earth-work activities, for installation of the discharge piping, would be confined to a depth of 8 feet and an area of 0.07 acre.

At the completion of construction, the NDC lift pump station would be used to maintain the drain levels below the maximum allowable elevation that triggers the RD 1000 pumps at Pumping Plant 4 to turn on and discharge excess drain water into the Natomas Cross Canal. By allowing for recycling of drain water, the NDC lift pump station would reduce the quantity and rate of pumping from the Sacramento River at the Sankey Diversion, thereby reducing the demand for Sacramento River water. Project implementation would increase tailwater recovery by up to 4,000 AF per irrigation season. In critically dry years when NCMWC may receive less than 100 percent of its allocation of Sacramento River water, the increased availability of tailwater would allow for irrigation of up to 1,200 acres of existing farmland that would otherwise be subject to fallowing attributable to limited water supply.

2.3 Findings

Potential adverse impacts from the construction and operation of the NDC lift pump station with the potential to be significant without consideration for Project mitigation efforts were determined to be limited to those to cultural and ecological resources. Such impacts include those to the giant garter snake and its habitat, protected under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as well as species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MTBA).

These potential impacts were determined to be fully mitigated under the Project. Mitigation measures to be implemented to avoid or minimize the potential for impacts to these species are detailed in Section 3.6.2 of the IS/ES. Mitigation measures that would be implemented to avoid or minimize the potential for project-related impacts to cultural resources are detailed in Section 3.7.2 of the IS/EA.

The IS/EA was prepared in accordance with NEPA Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46). Effects on several other environmental resources were examined and found to be absent or minor.

Based on the findings detailed in the IS/EA, Reclamation has determined that its Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Rationale for this determination and laws, regulations and Executive Orders (EO) defining the threshold of “significance” are as follows:

1. Reclamation’s Proposed Action will not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)).
2. Reclamation’s Proposed Action will not significantly impact natural resources and unique geographical characteristics such as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation, and refuge lands; wilderness areas; WSRs; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order (EO) 11990); flood plains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3) and 43 CFR 46.215(b)).
3. Reclamation’s Proposed Action will not have possible effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).
4. Reclamation’s Proposed Action will neither establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).
5. There is no potential for the effects of Reclamation’s Proposed Action to be considered highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).
6. Reclamation’s Proposed Action will not have significant cumulative impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).
7. Reclamation’s Proposed Action will not adversely affect any districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)). Pursuant to 54 USC § 306108, commonly known as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and its implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800, Reclamation notified the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) of a finding of No Adverse Effect to historic properties for the undertaking. In correspondence dated March 15, 2018, the

SHPO responded with no objection to Reclamation's finding. Documentation of the consultation process is included in the IS/EA as Appendix D.

8. Reclamation consulted with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on a determination that the Project would result in No Jeopardy to the giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*) and its habitat in correspondence dated January 8, 2018. The Service concurred with Reclamation's determination and issued an associated Biological Opinion and Incidental Take Statement in correspondence dated August 1, 2018. No other species listed, or proposed for listing, as threatened or endangered species under the Federal ESA were identified in the Project area (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)). A Consistency Determination from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife was signed on September 6, 2018. All required compensatory mitigation credits were purchase on August 31, 2018.

9. Reclamation's Proposed Action will not violate Federal, state, tribal or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).

10. Reclamation's Proposed Action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets (ITA; 512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993). The nearest ITA is located approximately 14 miles east-northeast of the Proposed Action.

11. Implementing Reclamation's Proposed Action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities (EO 12898).

12. Reclamation's Proposed Action will not limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007 and 512 DM 3).