

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Firebaugh Canal Water District 5-Year Transfer Program

FONSI-18-025



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

May 2019

Mission Statements

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to conserve and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people, provide scientific and other information about natural resources and natural hazards to address societal challenges and create opportunities for the American people, and honor the Nation's trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities to help them prosper.

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-18-025

**Firebaugh Canal Water District 5-Year
Transfer Program**



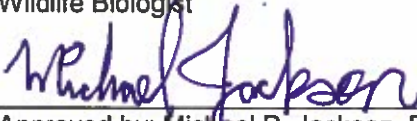
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05/01/2019
Date



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5/1/19
Date



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5/7/2019
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Introduction

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) which is supported by Reclamation's attached Environmental Assessment (EA)-18-025, *Firebaugh Canal Water District 5-Year Transfer Program*, hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

Firebaugh Canal Water District (Firebaugh), a member of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors (Exchange Contractors), has requested approval from Reclamation for a series of annual transfers between 2019 and 2023 of up to 7,500 acre-feet per year (AFY) of its Central Valley Project (CVP) water supply to Pacheco Water District, Panoche Water District, San Luis Water District, and Westlands Water District, hereafter referred to as the Transfer Recipient Districts.

Alternatives Considered

No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not approve a series of annual transfers over a five-year period (2019 through 2023) of up to 7,500 AFY of Firebaugh's Exchange Contract CVP water supplies to the Transfer Recipient Districts. Reclamation would continue to deliver CVP water to Firebaugh and the Transfer Recipient Districts pursuant to their respective CVP water service contracts.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to approve a series of annual transfers over a five-year period (calendar year 2019 through 2023) of up to 7,500 AFY of Firebaugh's Exchange Contract CVP water supplies to the Transfer Recipient Districts. The proposed transfers would occur from April through December of each year when water is transferred and would not exceed the maximum of 37,500 AF over the five-year period. To make Firebaugh's CVP water supplies available for the transfers, Firebaugh landowners would pump up to 17 cubic feet per second of groundwater (for a maximum of 36 AF/day) from three wells. The groundwater would be used to meet in-district demands, in lieu of taking surface water deliveries dedicated to Firebaugh under the Exchange Contract.

Environmental Commitments

Firebaugh and the Transfer Recipient Districts shall implement the environmental protection measures listed in Table 1 of EA-18-025 to avoid environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action. Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

Comments on the EA

Reclamation provided the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft FONSI and Draft EA between November 21, 2018 and December 21, 2018. Reclamation received comment letters from Arvin-Edison Water Storage District and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The comment letters are included in Appendix E of EA-18-025.

Arvin-Edison Water Storage District's comments did not raise concerns or issues specific to the environmental analysis presented in EA-18-025, rather was focused on contractual concerns related to the Exchange Contract. As such, no changes have been made to the EA and no response is required.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife raised the following concerns (1) subsidence and groundwater overdrafting, (2) water quality impacts to the Mendota Pool, (3) cumulative impacts, and (4) impacts to biological resources. Responses to the comments are included in Section 4.1 of the Final EA.

Reclamation has considered every comment in the comment letters. No additional information was provided that changed the analysis contained in EA-18-025.

Findings

In accordance with NEPA, Reclamation has determined that the approval of the Proposed Action is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment; consequently, an environmental impact statement is not required.

The following reasons are why the impacts from the proposed action are not significant:

- The proposed action will not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).
- The proposed action will not significantly affect natural resources and unique geographical characteristics such as proximity to historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation, and refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; 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)).
- There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).
- The 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)).

- The 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)).
- The proposed action will not have cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).
- The proposed action will not significantly affect historic properties (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).
- The proposed action will not significantly affect listed or proposed threatened or endangered species, or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).
- The proposed action will not threaten a violation of Federal, State, tribal or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).
- The proposed action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993).
- Implementing the proposed action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities (EO 12898).
- The proposed action will not limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007 and 512 DM 3).