



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Purchase of Water for Support of Fish and Wildlife on the Sacramento River

Finding of No Significant Impact
CGB-FONSI-2022-040

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Mission Statements

The Department of the Interior (DOI) conserves and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people, provides scientific and other information about natural resources and natural hazards to address societal challenges and create opportunities for the American people, and honors 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.

Background

In September 2022, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for Purchase of Water for Support of Fish and Wildlife on the Sacramento River and released the draft to the public on September 27, 2022, with comments due on October 7, 2021. Reclamation had received two comment letters on the above subject EA, one on behalf of the Natural Resource Defense Council, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, San Francisco Baykeeper, Restore the Delta, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association, Institute for Fisheries Resources, Friends of the River, the Bay Institute, Save our California Salmon, Sierra Club California, and Defenders of Wildlife; collectively referred to as the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), and the second was received by the Central Delta Water Agency. The comments received largely focused on contracting actions and subsequent analysis that would prohibit water from moving south of San Joaquin/Sacramento River Delta via transfers. The proposed action does not result in impacts to the existing contracts and there are no south of Delta transfers proposed. The final EA incorporates the responses to comments which include clarifications to water transfers and how the Proposed Action is within the effects analyzed in Reclamation's February 2020 Record of Decision and its Environmental Impact Statement, corresponding National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)'s 2019 Biological Opinion and United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) 2019 Biological Opinion on the *'Reinitiation of Consultation on the Coordinated Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project'*

Alternatives Including Proposed Action

Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would enter into a contract with the Sacramento River Settlement Contractor Non-Profit Corporation (SRSCC), acting on behalf of willing participants, to purchase up to 100 thousand acre-feet (TAF) of water the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors (Settlement Contractors) could have otherwise diverted in October 2022, consistent with Settlement Contracts. The contract between Reclamation and the SRSCC (or other willing Settlement Contractor participants,) would outline the roles and responsibilities of both parties and would identify the quantity and price of the water that Reclamation would purchase. The water acquired by Reclamation under the contract would remain in Shasta Reservoir and would increase the Shasta Reservoir storage level going into water year (WY) 2023 and will be used for fish and wildlife purposes.. This higher reservoir elevation may promote better cold-water pool and temperature management in WY 2023. Additionally, this purchase would also support a steady release schedule from Keswick Reservoir through mid-October to help avoid dewatering Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon redds and help developing Sacramento River fall-run Chinook Salmon avoid late season dewatering when fall releases at Keswick drop to minimums. Under the Proposed Action, the Settlement Contractors would not divert up to 100 TAF of water that could otherwise be delivered in October 2022.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not use drought-relief funding to purchase up to 100 TAF of water the Settlement Contractors would otherwise divert in October, consistent with Settlement Contracts to provide for increased storage in Shasta Reservoir going into WY 2023. Consequently, storage levels in Shasta Reservoir would be reduced by this amount of water going into WY 2023; and Reclamation

may have reduced flexibility to meet cold water and temperature management targets for WY 2023.

Under the No Action Alternative, the Settlement Contractors would divert the 100 TAF of conserved water in Shasta Reservoir, during the month of October, consistent with Settlement Contracts. Since this water would be diverted in October, the water could be used to irrigate permanent crops, or winter flooding for rice decomp, or for field flooding of fallowed crop lands that is expected to benefit groundwater recharge. Due to the current dry conditions of the Settlement Contractor water conveyance systems (includes systemwide irrigation canal and ditches), a significant portion of the water diverted during the month of October would be accounted towards conveyance losses.

Findings

Reclamation determined that the proposed action is within the range of affects analyzed in the 2019 Biological Opinions would have no additional effects on federally listed on aquatic species beyond those previously analyzed in the biological opinions for the operation of the Central Valley Project as has been clarified in the effects section for the Proposed Action

Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action has no potential to cause effects to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46). Following are the reasons why the impacts of the Proposed Action are not significant, with respect to the affected environment and degree of effects of the action (40 CFR 1501.3(b)).

1. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1501.3(b)(2)(iii)).
2. The Proposed Action will not violate federal, state, tribal, or local law protecting the environment (40 CFR 1501.3(b)(2)(iv)).
3. The Proposed Action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum – July 2, 1993).
4. Implementing the Proposed Action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low income populations and communities (EO 12898 – February 11, 1994).
5. The 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 – May 24, 1996 and 512 DM 3 – June 5, 1998).