



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Arvin-Edison Water Storage District and Metropolitan Water District 10-year Water Transfer/Exchange Program

CGB-FONSI-2024-015

Finding of No Significant Impact

Mission Statements

The U.S. 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

CGB-FONSI-2024-015

**Arvin-Edison Water Storage District and
Metropolitan Water District 10-year Water
Transfer/Exchange Program**

Recommended by: David E. Hyatt
Resource Management Division Chief

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

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) CGB-EA-2024-015, *Arvin-Edison Water Storage District and Metropolitan Water District 10-year Water Transfer/Exchange Program*, hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

Since the 1990s, Arvin-Edison Water Storage District (AESWD) has maintained a long-term Water Management Program (Program) with Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). Under the Program, a portion of MWD's State Water Project (SWP) supply (up to 388,889 acre-feet, which equates to approximately 350,000 acre-feet after a 10 percent loss factor is applied) could be banked within AESWD's groundwater bank at any one time. Upon request, Arvin-Edison would return MWD's banked SWP water. This has resulted in an effective and efficient water management program benefiting both districts.

Alternatives Considered

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not approve the exchange of AEWSW's CVP water for MWD's SWP water. AEWSW would still be able to pump MWD's previously stored SWP water from AEWSW's groundwater bank and deliver it to MWD via the California Aqueduct, albeit at a greatly reduced quantity. MWD would not receive CVP water available to AEWSW.

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to approve AEWSW's request to transfer/exchange a portion of its CVP water supply for MWD's SWP supply (including previously banked supplies) over a 10-year period from Contract Year 2024 through Contract Year 2034 (March 1, 2024 through February 28, 2035) and as described in more detail below. The proposed exchanges/transfers would total up to 100,000 AF per year of CVP water supplies.

The following CVP water types (including those supplies made available through transfers/exchanges) would potentially be part of the Program:

- Friant Division Class 1;
- Friant Division Class 2;
- SJRRP Recovered Water Account Article 16(b) and Unreleased Restoration Flows;
- Recaptured SJRRP Flows;
- Section 215 water supplies, to the extent Section 215 water declared by Reclamation is available to AEWSD.

The following conveyance mechanisms would take place for MWD to receive AEWSD's CVP water:

Friant Division CVP water would be provided directly via delivery from the Friant-Kern Canal (FKC) and AEWSD's distribution system, including its connections to the California Aqueduct at Milepost 227 (Reach 14C) or via its capacity in the Cross Valley Canal to the California Aqueduct at Tupman/Milepost 238 (Reach 12E).

South of Delta CVP water supplies, including SJRRP recaptured flows, would be provided to DWR at O'Neill Forebay for delivery to MWD.

The Proposed Action is contingent upon approval of the Change in Place of Use (CPOU) by the SWRCB, and would only be permitted during the timeframe for which the CPOU is in effect. As described in Section 1.3, the SWRCB has already approved a CPOU from July 21, 2023 through July 20, 2024 for this Proposed Action as well as other programs. Future approvals will only be approved once a new temporary CPOU is in place.

Groundwater Banking

MWD stores a portion of its SWP supply in AEWSD's groundwater banking facilities, depending on annual allocations. AEWSD is then obligated to return the banked SWP water to MWD on request on a one-for-one basis. Under the Proposed Action, AEWSD would be allowed the option and flexibility to return water to MWD through an exchange of its available CVP Delta/San Luis Reservoir (SLR) or Friant surface supplies (CVP water). CVP water supplied to MWD by AEWSD in lieu of extraction to recover previously stored SWP water would result in a balanced exchange or one-for-one reduction of MWD's groundwater banking account with AEWSD, less losses.

Regulation Program

Additionally, the approval of the Proposed Action and the temporary CPOU would allow AEWSD to deliver CVP water supplies to MWD when they are available, and then receive back SWP water supplies in exchange, at a later time. This program better facilitates the use of AEWSD CVP water supplies that have a limited opportunity for use under current CVP operations. The ability to regulate water in this manner reduces the need to store the water by way of direct recharge and subsequent extraction. This portion of the Proposed Action would be on a one-for-one basis, less losses.

Fall/Winter Supplies Exchange

In the event that hydrologic conditions permit, and AEWSD believes that there may be limited ability to carry over CVP supplies in CVP reservoirs, AEWSD CVP water supplies would be delivered to MWD to reduce risk of spill and subsequent potential forfeiture of CVP water supplies. The CVP water would be delivered to MWD by exchange in SLR or directly into the

California Aqueduct via the Friant-Kern Canal and AEWS facilities, including the Cross Valley Canal. MWD would later return a lesser amount (returning 2 acre-feet for every 3 acre-feet) to AEWS. The unbalanced nature of the exchange reflects the compensation to MWD for its water management services, less losses.

Environmental Commitments

AEWS and MWD shall implement the environmental protection measures listed in Table 1 of the EA 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 Draft EA between January 19, 2024 and February 20, 2024. No comments were received.

Findings

These transfers/exchanges would only occur in wet years when there is already sufficient water in the San Joaquin River to meet existing commitments. These transfers/exchanges would neither increase nor decrease the amount of water flowing into the Kern River. No critical habitat occurs within the AEWS, so none would be affected by the proposed action. Although designated critical habitat for multiple federally listed species occurs within MWD, the proposed action would not cause alteration of natural stream courses, or construction activities, therefore no critical habitat would be affected. With the implementation of the provided avoidance measures, Reclamation has determined that there would be No Effect to listed species or designated critical habitat under the ESA (16 U.S.C. §1531 et. seq.) resulting from the approval of the Proposed Action.

There would be no impacts to cultural resources as a result of implementing the Proposed Action as the Proposed Action would facilitate the flow of water through existing facilities to existing users. No new construction or ground disturbing activities would occur as part of the Proposed Action. Reclamation has determined that these activities have no potential to cause effects to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

In accordance with NEPA, Reclamation considered potential short-term and long-term effects of the Proposed Action, both beneficial and adverse. 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).