

Long-Term Operation – Final Environmental Impact Statement

Chapter 1 – Introduction

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Banks Pumping Plant	Harvey O. Banks Pumping Plant
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CVP	Central Valley Project
Delta	Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta
DWR	California Department of Water Resources
EIS	environmental impact statement
FR	Federal Register
M&I	municipal and industrial
MAF	million acre-feet
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
SWP	State Water Project
TAF	thousand acre-feet
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Chapter 1 Introduction

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) helps inform the public and decisions-makers on potential federal actions by examining a range of reasonable alternatives and the potential effect on the environment. The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) manages the Central Valley Project (CVP). The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) manages the State Water Project (SWP). This EIS describes and analyzes alternatives for the long-term operation of the CVP to store, release, blend releases, route and divert water and the long-term operation of SWP facilities in the Delta.

Reclamation last signed a Record of Decision on Feb. 18, 2020, for the *Reinitiation of Consultation on the Coordinated Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project*. On January 20, 2021, President Biden issued “*Executive Order 13990 on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis*”, directing the Department of Interior to review all existing regulations, orders, guidance documents, policies, and any other similar agency actions (agency actions) promulgated, issued, or adopted between January 20, 2017, and January 20, 2021, that are or may be inconsistent with, or present obstacles to, the policy set forth in section 1 of the order. This included the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) *Biological Opinion on Long Term Operation of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project* (October 21, 2019) (National Marine Fisheries Service 2019) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) *Biological Opinion for the Reinitiation of Consultation on the Coordinated Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project* (October 21, 2019) (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2019). Reclamation incorporates the 2019 EIS analysis by reference.

To address the review by Executive Order 13990 and to voluntarily reconcile CVP operating criteria, as appropriate with operational requirements of the SWP under the California Endangered Species Act, Reclamation reinitiated consultation with USFWS and NMFS on September 30, 2021. Although Reclamation and DWR strive for a coordinated operation of the CVP and SWP, Reclamation and the CVP are not subject to requirements under the California Endangered Species Act.

On February 28, 2022, Reclamation posted a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Hold Public Scoping Meetings on the 2021 Endangered Species Act Reinitiation of Section 7 Consultation on the Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project (87 Federal Register [FR] 11093).

1.1 Project Background

Reclamation’s mission is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public. Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier in the United States, and the nation’s second

largest producer of hydroelectric power. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits.

The CVP consists of 20 dams and reservoirs that together can store nearly 12 million acre-feet (MAF) of water. Reclamation holds over 270 contracts and agreements for water supplies that depend upon CVP operations. Through operation of the CVP, Reclamation delivers water in 29 of California's 58 counties in the following approximate amounts: 5 MAF of water for farms; 600 thousand acre-feet (TAF) of water for municipal and industrial (M&I) uses; and an average of 355 TAF of Level 2 CVP water for wildlife refuges (plus additional supplies from other sources). Reclamation operates the CVP under water rights granted by the state of California, including those intended to protect agricultural and fish and wildlife beneficial uses in the Delta. On average, the CVP generates approximately 4.5 million megawatt hours of electricity annually.

Reclamation operates the CVP in coordination with DWR's operation of the SWP, pursuant to applicable law and provisions of the *Agreement Between the United States of America and the State of California for Coordinated Operation of the Central and State Water Project* and its associated amendments. The mission of DWR is to manage the water resources of California, in cooperation with other agencies, to benefit the state's people and to protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environment.

DWR holds contracts with 29 public agencies in the Feather River Area, North Bay Area, South Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast, and Southern California for water supplies from the SWP. The SWP delivers on average 2.6 MAF of contracted water supplies annually. Two contractors from the North Bay Area receive water from the Barker Slough Pumping Plant in the Delta. DWR pumps water at the Banks Pumping Plant in the Delta for delivery to the remaining 24 public water agencies in the SWP service areas south of the Delta.

1.2 Scope of Analysis for Resource Areas

The action alternatives evaluated in this EIS include a range of operational changes for long-term operation of the CVP and SWP. Reclamation hosted six virtual scoping meetings between March 8 and March 17, 2022, presenting information about the CVP, SWP, and the NEPA process and then inviting comments. Attendance at the six meetings included members of the public, landowners, and representatives from public agencies. Written comments were also accepted during the scoping period from February 28 through March 30, 2022. Major areas of public comments included:

- Project Purpose, Scope, and Analysis
- Endangered Species Act
- Biological Resources
- Agriculture
- Groundwater
- Water Quality

- Water Storage and Conveyance
- Cultural and Tribal Consultation
- Pertinent Regulations
- Socioeconomics
- Climate Change and Drought
- Recreation
- Scoping Process
- Water Rights and Water Contracts
- Water Conservation Strategies

Reclamation has framed this EIS to address the issues identified through public scoping.

1.3 Selection of Preferred Alternative

Reclamation has identified Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative. Alternative 2 was developed through a multi-agency consensus process including California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), DWR, NMFS, and USFWS. The preferred alternative best meets the Purpose and Need, including the goals of E.O.13990 because NMFS and USFWS reached consensus on an alternative for Reclamation to submit for consultation. Alternative 2 incorporates the Delta criteria proposed in DWR's ITP for the Delta facilities of the SWP to harmonize operations of the CVP and SWP.