



— BUREAU OF —  
RECLAMATION

# **Drought Adjustment for Widren Water District's Water Quality, Supply, and Drainage Enhancement Project**

**Finding of No Significant Impact  
CGB-FONSI-2022-026**

## **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-2022-026**

**Drought Adjustment for Widren Water District's  
Water Quality, Supply, and Drainage  
Enhancement Project**

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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) CGB-EA-2022-026, *Drought Adjustment for Widren Water District's Water Quality, Supply, and Drainage Enhancement Project*, hereby incorporated by reference.

## Background

In February 2022, Reclamation completed an EA that analyzed a second extension of Widren Water District's (Widren) proposed Water Quality, Supply, and Drainage Enhancement Pilot Project (Pilot Project). The extension included the issuance of a 3-year Warren Act contract/Exchange Agreement for the continued annual introduction of up to 1,000 acre-feet of reverse osmosis (RO) treated groundwater in the Delta-Mendota Canal. Based on inclusion of specific environmental commitments for the Pilot Project, including monitoring, Reclamation determined that there would be no significant affect to the quality of the human environment and a FONSI was issued on February 28, 2022. Subsequently, Reclamation issued the 3-year Warren Act Contract/Exchange Agreement to Widren effective March 1, 2022.

As part of the Pilot Project, the non-Project water introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal can be operationally exchanged for delivery to certain Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors as described in the February 2022 EA. The operational exchange involves Reclamation using the non-Project water introduced at milepost 102.04R to meet downstream CVP demands while an equivalent amount of CVP water, less conveyance losses, is provided to CVP contractors located upstream of the introduction point and/or stored in San Luis Reservoir for later delivery to participants in the Proposed Action.

On April 21, 2021, Governor Newsome proclaimed a drought emergency which was expanded on May 10, 2021 and October 19, 2021 until it covered all counties within the State ([State drought response \(ca.gov\)](https://www.ca.gov/)). Due to current drought conditions, Reclamation does not have CVP water available that can be operationally exchanged for Widren's non-Project water. Widren has agreed to provide the non-Project water to Westlands Water District (Westlands) but needs to find a way to provide the water to Westlands that does not involve an operational exchange. The purpose of this project is to provide Widren's available non-Project water to Westlands without the operational exchange with Reclamation.

# Alternatives Considered

## No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not increase the amount of non-Project water allowed to be annually introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal under Widren's existing 3-year Warren Act contract/Exchange Agreement by an additional 1,000 acre-feet. The contract and the operation of the Pilot Project would remain unchanged and would be implemented as analyzed in the February 2022 EA.

## Proposed Action

Reclamation will amend the existing Warren Act Contract to increase the amount of non-Project water allowed to be annually introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal by an additional 1,000 acre-feet. This would allow up to 2,000 acre-feet to be annually introduced into the canal and conveyed to Westlands or other participants identified in the February 2022 EA.

Operational exchanges, when available, would continue to be implemented as described in the February 2022 EA; however, during drought conditions, or when operational exchanges cannot be implemented, the non-Project water would be introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal at milepost 102.04R where it would be conveyed and released into the Mendota Pool and picked up by Westlands through their Lateral 7 intake pumps. The majority of the non-Project water would be distributed to Westlands' landowners located adjacent to Lateral 7; however, a portion may be introduced into the San Luis Canal and conveyed to downstream turnouts off the San Luis Canal for delivery within Westlands under Westlands existing Warren Act Contract for the San Luis Canal.

No construction or modification of facilities would be needed to complete the Proposed Action.

## Operation of the Reverse Osmosis Treatment Plant

The additional 1,000 acre-feet would require a subsequent increase in groundwater pumped for RO treatment. The maximum increase would be double what was previously envisioned (i.e., from 1,200 acre-feet to 2,400 acre-feet annually). The water would then be treated in the same way as described in the February 2022 EA. The RO treated groundwater would be tested in accordance with the same requirements described in the monitoring plan prior to being conveyed to milepost 102.04R on the Delta-Mendota Canal.

The effluent or backflush water produced by the RO Treatment Plant would also be increased from approximately 200 acre-feet to 400 acre-feet and blended with up to 800 acre-feet of groundwater from the M-1 Source Well within existing underground piping, and then utilized within Widren for irrigation of salt tolerant crops in their Reuse Area.

## Environmental Commitments

The following commitments are required to be implemented as part of the Proposed Action:

- Widren and Westlands will coordinate with the Mendota Pool Water Master and the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority prior to discharging the non-Project water from the Delta-Mendota Canal.
- Westlands will implement the water quality monitoring plan required for their groundwater pumping and conveyance project pursuant to their existing Warren Act Contract for all water proposed to be introduced into the San Luis Canal (see Reclamation 2020).
- Widren will continue to implement all environmental commitments and monitoring described in the February 2022 EA for the Pilot Project.
- The water would not be used to place untilled or native lands into production, or to convert lands that have been fallowed or untilled for three or more years.
- The Proposed Action cannot alter the flow regime of natural waterways or natural watercourses such as rivers, streams, creeks, ponds, pools, wetlands, etc., so as to have a detrimental effect on fish or wildlife or their habitats.
- The treated water shall be used for beneficial purposes and in accordance with Federal Reclamation law and guidelines, as applicable.
- Use of the water shall comply with all federal, state, local, and tribal law, and requirements imposed for protection of the environment and Indian Trust Assets.
- Widren shall adhere to their Regional Board's Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for discharges of groundwater.

Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

## Comments on the EA

Reclamation provided the public an opportunity to comment on the Pilot Project during three different public review periods (original project, first extension, and second extension). Reclamation also provided the public an opportunity to comment on the EA for this Action during a 5-day comment period. No comments were received during any of the public review periods.

## Findings

With the implementation of the environmental commitments listed above, Reclamation has determined that there would be “no effect” to proposed or listed species or designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq.) and no take of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §703 et seq.) and The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668c).

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).

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).



— BUREAU OF —  
RECLAMATION

# **Drought Adjustment for Widren Water District's Water Quality, Supply, and Drainage Enhancement Project**

**CGB-EA-2022-026**

**Final Environmental Assessment**



## **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.

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# 1 Introduction

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) provided the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) between May 2 and May 6, 2022. No comments were received. Changes between this Final EA and the Draft EA, which are not minor editorial changes, are indicated by vertical lines in the left margin of this document.

## 1.1 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

In February 2022, Reclamation completed an EA that analyzed a second extension of Widren Water District's (Widren) proposed Water Quality, Supply, and Drainage Enhancement Pilot Project (Pilot Project). The extension included the issuance of a 3-year Warren Act contract/Exchange Agreement for the continued annual introduction of up to 1,000 acre-feet of reverse osmosis (RO) treated groundwater in the Delta-Mendota Canal. Based on inclusion of specific environmental commitments for the Pilot Project, including monitoring, Reclamation determined that there would be no significant affect to the quality of the human environment and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued on February 28, 2022 (Reclamation 2022). Subsequently, Reclamation issued the 3-year Warren Act Contract/Exchange Agreement to Widren effective March 1, 2022.

As part of the Pilot Project, the non-Project water introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal can be operationally exchanged for delivery to certain Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors as described in the February 2022 EA (Reclamation 2022). The operational exchange involves Reclamation using the non-Project water introduced at milepost 102.04R to meet downstream CVP demands while an equivalent amount of CVP water, less conveyance losses, is provided to CVP contractors located upstream of the introduction point and/or stored in San Luis Reservoir for later delivery to participants in the Proposed Action.

On April 21, 2021, Governor Newsome proclaimed a drought emergency which was expanded on May 10, 2021 and October 19, 2021 until it covered all counties within the State ([State drought response \(ca.gov\)](https://www.ca.gov/)). Due to current drought conditions, Reclamation does not have CVP water available that can be operationally exchanged for Widren's non-Project water. Widren has agreed to provide the non-Project water to Westlands Water District (Westlands) but needs to find a way to provide the water to Westlands that does not involve an operational exchange. The purpose of this project is to provide Widren's available non-Project water to Westlands without the operational exchange with Reclamation.

## 1.2 Scope

This EA is being prepared to examine the possible impacts of moving Widren's non-Project water to Westlands directly through the Mendota Pool, Lateral 7, and the San Luis Canal. This EA has also been prepared to examine the possible impacts of the No Action alternative.

Previous actions and analysis has been conducted for portions of the Proposed Action and include the following:

### **1.2.1 Westlands Groundwater Pumping and Conveyance Project**

Due to drought conditions and low CVP allocations, Westlands developed a five-year groundwater pumping and conveyance project that proposed to annually introduce up to 30,000 acre-feet of pumped groundwater into the San Luis Canal in years in which Westlands' CVP allocation was 20 percent or less. The groundwater would be introduced into Westlands Lateral 7 and conveyed to the Sana Luis Canal for direct delivery to downstream agricultural users located throughout the district or exchanged with Reclamation.

In 2015, Reclamation completed an EA that analyzed the proposed five-year project (Reclamation 2015). Reclamation determined that the project did not have the potential to cause direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse impacts to the following resources: air quality, cultural resources, environmental justice, global climate change, Indian Sacred Sites, Indian Trust Assets, land use, or socioeconomic resources. Reclamation also determined that, with the implementation of environmental commitments included as part of the project, direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to water resources and biological resources would be less than significant and issued a FONSI on June 5, 2015 (Reclamation 2015). The 2015 EA and FONSI are hereby incorporated by reference.

In 2020, Reclamation completed a second EA that extended the project an additional five-years. Based on the data gathered from the previous five-year period and continuation of environmental commitments, Reclamation determined that there would be no significant impacts and issued a FONSI on October 2, 2020 (Reclamation 2020). The 2020 EA and FONSI are hereby incorporated by reference.

## **2 Alternatives Including Proposed Action**

### **2.1 No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not increase the amount of non-Project water allowed to be annually introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal under Widren's existing 3-year Warren Act contract/Exchange Agreement by an additional 1,000 acre-feet. The contract and the operation of the Pilot Project would remain unchanged and would be implemented as analyzed in the February 2022 EA (Reclamation 2022).

### **2.2 Proposed Action**

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would amend the existing Warren Act Contract to increase the amount of non-Project water allowed to be annually introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal by an additional 1,000 acre-feet. This would allow up to 2,000 acre-feet to be annually

introduced into the canal and conveyed to Westlands or other participants identified in the February 2022 EA (Reclamation 2022).

Operational exchanges, when available, would continue to be implemented as described in the February 2022 EA; however, during drought conditions, or when operational exchanges cannot be implemented, the non-Project water would be introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal at milepost 102.04R where it would be conveyed and released into the Mendota Pool and picked up by Westlands through their Lateral 7 intake pumps. The majority of the non-Project water would be distributed to Westlands' landowners located adjacent to Lateral 7; however, a portion may be introduced into the San Luis Canal and conveyed to downstream turnouts off the San Luis Canal for delivery within Westlands under Westlands existing Warren Act Contract for the San Luis Canal.

No construction or modification of facilities would be needed to complete the Proposed Action.

### **2.2.1 Operation of the Reverse Osmosis Treatment Plant**

The additional 1,000 acre-feet would require a subsequent increase in groundwater pumped for RO treatment. The maximum increase would be double what was previously envisioned (i.e., from 1,200 acre-feet to 2,400 acre-feet annually). The water would then be treated in the same way as described in the February 2022 EA. The RO treated groundwater would be tested in accordance with the same requirements described in the monitoring plan (Reclamation 2017 and 2019) prior to being conveyed to milepost 102.04R on the Delta-Mendota Canal.

The effluent or backflush water produced by the RO Treatment Plant would also be increased from approximately 200 acre-feet to 400 acre-feet and blended with up to 800 acre-feet of groundwater from the M-1 Source Well within existing underground piping, and then utilized within Widren for irrigation of salt tolerant crops in their Reuse Area (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Widren Water District's Reuse Area

## 2.2.2 Permitting

Widren operates under the State Water Resources Control Board's Waste Discharge Requirements General Order (Order R5-2015-0095) for growers in the Grassland Drainage Area. This Order is part of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program and regulates discharge to groundwater.

## 2.2.3 Environmental Commitments

The following commitments are required to be implemented as part of the Proposed Action:

- Widren and Westlands will coordinate with the Mendota Pool Water Master and the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority prior to discharging the non-Project water from the Delta-Mendota Canal.
- Westlands will implement the water quality monitoring plan required for their groundwater pumping and conveyance project pursuant to their existing Warren Act Contract for all water proposed to be introduced into the San Luis Canal (see Reclamation 2020).
- Widren will continue to implement all environmental commitments and monitoring described in the February 2022 EA for the Pilot Project.
- The water would not be used to place untilled or native lands into production, or to convert lands that have been fallowed or untilled for three or more years.
- The Proposed Action cannot alter the flow regime of natural waterways or natural watercourses such as rivers, streams, creeks, ponds, pools, wetlands, etc., so as to have a detrimental effect on fish or wildlife or their habitats.
- The treated water shall be used for beneficial purposes and in accordance with Federal Reclamation law and guidelines, as applicable.
- Use of the water shall comply with all federal, state, local, and tribal law, and requirements imposed for protection of the environment and Indian Trust Assets.
- Widren shall adhere to their Regional Board's Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for discharges of groundwater.

Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

# 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

The Affected environment is primarily the same as described in the February 2022 EA (Reclamation 2022) which is hereby incorporated by reference. As the February 2022 EA has been incorporated by reference the Affected Environment is not repeated here. The only change in the Action area from the February 2022 EA is the addition of the Mendota Pool, Lateral 7, and the introduction of the non-Project water into the San Luis Canal from Lateral 7 which are addressed below.

The Mendota Pool is impounded by Mendota Dam, which is owned and operated by Central California Irrigation District. The Pool primarily serves as a conveyance facility but is also used as a short-term storage and re-regulation reservoir. The Pool is supplied with surface water from the

Delta-Mendota Canal (its' primary source), the San Joaquin River (during restoration and flood releases from Friant Dam), and the Kings River via Fresno Slough (during flood releases from Pine Flat Dam). In addition, local wells owned by the Mendota Pool Group, Tranquillity Irrigation District, and Fresno Slough Water District also pump groundwater into the Pool, and the Mendota Wildlife Area drains its waterfowl ponds into the Pool during the spring. Water is diverted from the Pool for agricultural and wildlife uses from various inlets including Lateral 7. Most of this water is used by the members of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (Exchange Contractors) to irrigate lands within their service areas, but there are other CVP contractors that divert water from the Pool for irrigation.

Water quality conditions in the Mendota Pool depend on inflows from the Delta-Mendota Canal, groundwater pumped into Mendota Pool from local wells and, to a limited extent, San Joaquin River and Kings River inflows. Salinity as a measure of water quality refers to the concentration of dissolved minerals in water and is measured directly as total dissolved solids (TDS) or indirectly as Electrical Conductivity (EC). Water quality in the San Joaquin River varies considerably along the river's length. Between Friant Dam and the Mendota Pool, the quality of water is generally excellent with TDS of less than 50 milligrams per liter (mg/L). However, during the irrigation season, most of the water in the Mendota Pool is imported from the Delta via the Delta-Mendota Canal and this water has concentrations of TDS generally greater than 300 mg/L. The majority of the dissolved minerals consist of sodium chloride and other salts.

Westlands uses Lateral 7 to put water in and take water out of the Mendota Pool. The Lateral is also used to convey up to 30,000 acre-feet of groundwater from in-district landowner wells for introduction into the San Luis Canal when their CVP allocations are less than 20 percent. Reclamation, Westlands, and DWR monitor water quality, groundwater levels, and subsidence as part of this project. Water quality in the San Luis Canal is closely monitored to ensure the water quality criteria in Appendix A is adhered to in order to protect downstream beneficial uses. Data collected as part of the monitoring program during previous introductions from Lateral 7 indicates that constituents such as TDS and selenium changed very little between the two monitoring locations located upstream and downstream of the introduction point (Reclamation 2020). Current water quality for Lateral 7 is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Lateral 7 Water Quality Results for Constituents of Concern (sampled 2/28/2022)

Constituent	units	Maximum Contaminant Level	Reporting Limit	Testing Results
Arsenic	mg/l	0.01	0.002	0.0015
Boron	mg/l	2	NA	0.27
Bromide	mg/l	NA	NA	ND
Chloride	mg/l	250	N/A	115
Chromium, total		0.05	0.01	0.0022
Hexavalent Chromium	mg/l	0.01	0.001	ND
Manganese	mg/l	0.05	N/A	0.03
Nitrate (as N)	mg/l	10	0.4	ND
Selenium	mg/l	0.002	0.001	ND
Sodium	mg/l	100	NA	101



Constituent	units	Maximum Contaminant Level	Reporting Limit	Testing Results
Electrical Conductivity	μS/cm	1,600	N/A	771
Sulfate	mg/l	500	N/A	65.3
Total Dissolved Solids	mg/l	1,000	N/A	435
Total Organic Carbon	mg/l	NA	N/A	4.1
Gross Alpha*	pCi/l	15	3	1.76
1,2,3- Trichloropropane	μg/l	0.005	0.005	ND
Perfluorooctanic Acid (PFOA)**	ng/l	NA	0.82	ND
Perfluorooctanesulfonic Acid (PFOS)**	ng/l	NA	2.7	ND

\*Monthly testing only

\*\*One-time screening conducted prior to pumping individual wells and from Lateral 7 at the Adams Avenue pump station. Although there are no MCLs developed yet, there are notification levels and response levels. The notification levels are 5.1 PPT (PFOA) and 6.5 PPT (PFOS). The response levels are 10 PPT (PFOA) and 40 PPT (PFOS) based on a running four quarter average. The lowest concentration minimum reporting levels (LCMRL) are 0.82 ng/L (PFOA) and 2.7 ng/L (PFOS).

The San Luis Canal is a joint Federal/State concrete-lined canal with a capacity ranging from 8,350 to 13,100 cubic feet per second. It is the federally-built and operated section of the California Aqueduct and extends 102.5 miles from O'Neill Forebay, near Los Banos, in a southeasterly direction to a point west of Kettleman City. The 138-foot-wide channel is 36 feet deep, 40 feet wide at the bottom, and lined with concrete.

### 3.1 Air Quality

The increase in pumping from 1,200 acre-feet to up to 2,400 acre-feet annually for RO Treatment would not have any additional impacts to air quality. The electrical power usage of the M-1 Source well and the conveyance facilities, including Lateral 7 and the San Luis Canal, is within the typical range for the facilities involved. No air emissions are anticipated outside normal operational fluctuations.

### 3.2 Climate Change

The Proposed Action does not include construction of new facilities or modification to existing facilities. Although there would be an increase in groundwater pumping, the electrical production for this is addressed by the permits for the generating power plant which regulate greenhouse gas emissions. As such, there would be no additional impacts to global climate change.

### 3.3 Cultural Resources

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).

### **3.4 Environmental Justice**

Executive Order 12898 requires each federal agency to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects of its program, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. The Proposed Action would facilitate the flow of water through existing facilities to existing users and would, therefore, not cause dislocation, changes in employment, or increase flood, drought, or disease nor would it disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged or minority populations.

### **3.5 Indian Sacred Sites**

Executive Order 13007 (May 24, 1996) requires that federal agencies accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and avoids adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites. The Proposed Action would not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites. There would be no impacts to Indian sacred sites as a result of the Proposed Action.

### **3.6 Indian Trust Assets**

Indian Trust Assets are legal interests in assets that are held in trust by the United States for federally recognized Indian tribes or individuals. There are no Indian reservations, rancherias or allotments in the Proposed Action area. The nearest Indian Trust Asset is a public domain allotment about 27 miles to the south of the Proposed Action area. Based on the nature of the Proposed Action it does not appear to be in an area that will impact Indian hunting or fishing resources or water rights nor is the proposed activity on actual Indian lands. It is reasonable to assume that the Proposed Action will not have any impacts on Indian Trust Assets.

### **3.7 Land Use**

Under the Proposed Action, up to 337 acres of dry farmland within Widren would continue to receive blended effluent for irrigation of salt tolerant crops. This land would receive blended effluent from Widren's RO Treatment Plant regardless of whether the Proposed Action was implemented or not, as part of their ongoing drainage improvement activities. The non-Project water would be delivered to landowners in Westlands for existing agricultural purposes. There would be no land use change.

### 3.8 Biological Resources

The only change in the Action area from the February 2022 EA is the addition of the Mendota Pool, Lateral 7, and the introduction of non-Project water into the San Luis Canal from Lateral 7. Potentially affected biological resources and listed species would be the same as those addressed in the February 2022 EA. The Proposed Action would not result in land use change or involve any construction or change in natural stream habitat. Treated water introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal that would discharge into Mendota Pool and picked up by Westlands through Lateral 7 are well below constituents of concern, including selenium concentrations and salinity, and would not present an issue for species living in habitat that could receive water conveyed through Lateral 7 or San Luis Canal, such as giant garter snake, San Joaquin kit fox, or migratory birds such as the Western Burrowing Owl and Swainson's Hawk. Any water introduced into the San Luis Canal is required to meet the criteria identified in Appendix A, including the 2 µg/L selenium threshold, established to protect downstream beneficial uses. With the implementation of the environmental commitments included in Section 2.2.1, and based upon the nature of this Action, Reclamation has determined there would be No Effect to proposed or listed species or critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq.), and there would be no take of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §703 et seq.).

### 3.9 Water Resources

Water quality for the RO treated water and blended water were addressed in the February 2022 EA and would not change under the Proposed Action. The increase in the amount of treated water being introduced into the Delta-Mendota Canal would not change the water quality of the RO-treated water which was below all of the thresholds for constituents of concern (see Table 3 in Reclamation 2022).

Subsidence monitoring for the Pilot Project found that the source well does not substantially increase subsidence above the regional rate. Although the Proposed Action would potentially double the amount of pumped groundwater (from 1,200 to up to 2,400 acre-feet), Widren would pump from above the Corcoran Clay, which has the potential to lower a perched saline water table (San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program 1990), thus improving local water quality and the otherwise drainage impaired lands within the district boundaries. Due to drought and reduced surface water supply availability, it is anticipated that groundwater pumping will increase regionally as allowed under Groundwater Sustainability Plans. This will increase subsidence rates as it did in previous drought periods. The Pilot Project requires subsidence monitoring to ensure that the groundwater pumping does not increase subsidence rates above baseline regional rates. If it is found that subsidence rates are increasing, groundwater pumping would be curtailed until groundwater levels recover reducing this potentially adverse cumulative impact.

Widren estimates that up to 400 acre-feet of effluent would be generated from treatment or backflush at the RO Treatment Plant. This effluent would be blended with up to 800 acre-feet of groundwater and then used to irrigate salt tolerant crops on Widren's Reuse Area (Figure 1) allowing for some recharge in the area. As noted in the February 2022 EA, water quality for the blended water reused in Widren's Reuse Area was close to what was anticipated. For example, specific conductivity blended values were estimated to be between 12,000 and 14,000 µmhos/cm, the

average actual concentrate stream was 12,500  $\mu\text{mhos}/\text{cm}$ . The average specific conductivity in the blended water used in the Reuse Area was 8,105  $\mu\text{mhos}/\text{cm}$  (Dan Nelson, personal communication 2019). This would not change under the Proposed Action.

Widren implements its drainage program consistent with the Regional Board's Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for discharge to groundwater. No effluent or RO treatment backflush water would leave Widren. Therefore, there would be no impact to out-of-district water supplies from the use of blended water in Widren.

The additional RO-treated water would be released from the DMC into the Mendota Pool and conveyed through Lateral 7 to the San Luis Canal where it would be delivered to Westlands' landowners for irrigation of existing crops. This would provide supplemental water supplies benefitting overall water supplies in the district. As shown in Table 1, water introduced from Lateral 7 into the San Luis Canal meets the water quality criteria included in Appendix B of the 2020 EA (Reclamation 2020). As this water comes from Mendota Pool and groundwater pumped within the district which the RO-treated water would be blended with, it is anticipated that the water quality introduced into the San Luis Canal or used by landowners off the lateral would be similar to what is in Table 1 and there would be no adverse impacts to downstream beneficial uses.

## 4 Consultation and Coordination

### 4.1 Agencies and Persons Consulted

Reclamation has consulted with the following regarding the Proposed Action:

- Widren Water District
- Westlands Water District

The Proposed Action will be coordinated with DWR, San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority, and the Mendota Pool Water Master prior to any water being moved through their respective systems.

### 4.2 Public Review Period

Reclamation provided the public an opportunity to comment on the Pilot Project during three different public review periods (original project, first extension, and second extension). Reclamation also provided the public an opportunity to comment on this EA during a 5-day comment period. No comments were received during any of the public review periods.

## 5 References

- Reclamation (Bureau of Reclamation). 2015. Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment for Westlands Water District Groundwater Warren Act Contract (FONSI/EA-15-001). Signed June 2015. South-Central California Area Office. Fresno, California. Available: [https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_details.php?Project\\_ID=21021](https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_project_details.php?Project_ID=21021).
- Reclamation (Bureau of Reclamation). 2020. Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment CGB-EA-2020-032 for the Five-Year Warren Act for Westlands Water District. Signed October 2020. South-Central California Area Office. Fresno, California. Available: [https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_details.php?Project\\_ID=46184](https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_project_details.php?Project_ID=46184).
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