



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Environmental Assessment Strawberry Valley
Project 1920 Act Conversion - PRO-EA-22-004

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Provo Area Office Provo, Utah

Introduction

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has worked collaboratively with the Strawberry Water Users Association (SWUA) and some of the Strawberry Valley Project (SVP) contract holders to identify solutions to provide greater flexibility in the use of water contractually delivered through the Bonneville Unit (BU) of the Central Utah Project (CUP) for the SVP. The SVP was originally authorized for irrigation purposes only, with very limited incidental municipal and industrial (M&I) use based on specific contracts. With growing M&I demands in south Utah County, there is a need to convert the water from irrigation to miscellaneous purposes, which includes M&I. The Proposed Action has been developed with the principal purpose to convert the 1991 Contract Water and SVP High Flow Water from irrigation to M&I uses, thereby responding to the evolving needs of the region.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) considered the No Action, Proposed Action, and eliminated five other alternatives from further analysis that were not within the scope of the purpose and need.

No Action

Under the No Action, Reclamation will not authorize the conversion of the 1991 Contract Water and SVP High Flow Water to miscellaneous purposes. The water will continue to be used primarily for irrigation, restricting flexibility, and potentially limiting the ability to meet increasing M&I water demands in the region. The No Action Alternative does not address the need for flexibility and does not support the growing urban needs of south Utah County.

Under the No Action, contracts to authorize use of the 1991 Contract Water and SVP High Flow Water for miscellaneous purposes will not be entered into by Reclamation and the SVP contract holders. Without conversion, Reclamation and the SVP contract holders will need to seek a long-term solution to replace water dedication agreements (WDAs).

Under the No Action, no additional water will be made available for future non-irrigation use from the 1991 Contract Water and SVP High Flow Water. This would result in the 1991 Contract Water remaining in Strawberry Reservoir without a downstream market.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action, as described in the EA, authorizes conversion of the 1991 Contract Water and SVP High Flow Water from irrigation use to miscellaneous purposes, including M&I uses, delineates the service area boundary, breaks appurtenance of the water to specific parcels of land, defines the term use of the water as the “irrigation season,” and authorizes Reclamation to enter into the primary conversion contract, as well as third-party contracts. Each of those actions together with other details are found in the bulleted list below:

- Reclamation will be authorized to enter into a primary conversion contract as well as third-party contracts with SVP contract holders to convert the 1991 Contract Water and SVP High Flow Water to be able to use it for miscellaneous purpose,

which include all uses, including all agriculture and municipal and industrial purposes.

- Reclamation will delineate the service area boundary for current and future purposes, which includes south Utah County, from Springville to Santaquin on the east side of Utah Lake and through Genola and West Mountain on the west side of Utah Lake (approximately 120,285 acres - see Map Figure 1 - SVP Service Area of the EA).
- Reclamation will sever appurtenance of the 1991 Contract Water and SVP High Flow Water to the irrigated lands within the SVP Service Area, which will remove the current Federal requirements for “suspension and transfer” of irrigation water. Water transfers will still be subject to requirements imposed by the State of Utah and other local authorities.
- Reclamation will maintain the timing (irrigation season) and quantities of water outlined in the 1991 agreement.
- Reclamation will continue to protect irrigated agriculture in the SVP Service Area for as long as producers desire to commercially farm and ensure that existing miscellaneous uses are compliant with Reclamation law and policy.

These components are described in detail in Section 2.3 of the EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis in the EA and supporting documents, I have determined that none of the analyzed alternatives would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for this action. This determination is additionally based on the evaluation of the intensity or severity of the anticipated effects of the Proposed Action as described in the accompanying EA.

Summary of Impacts

The specialists within the PRO of Reclamation considered factors described in the analysis disclosure chapter of the EA and evaluated the significance or degree of effects, whether beneficial or adverse of the selected alternative. The environmental commitments outlined in Chapter 4 of the final EA are incorporated into this FONSI by reference and considered part of the Proposed Action. These commitments must be implemented as outlined in the final EA to mitigate potential environmental impacts.

As stated within 40 CFR 1501.3(d); In considering whether an adverse effect of the proposed action is significant, agencies shall examine both the context of the action and the intensity of the effect. Reclamation has taken into consideration the potential effects of the implementation of the Proposed Action on the following resources of the human environment:

Reservoir Operations and Streamflow: The Proposed Action is not expected to significantly impact reservoir operations and streamflow. The timing, quantity, and location of water deliveries would remain consistent with historical patterns, ensuring the continued delivery of water during the irrigation season.

Land Use: The Proposed Action would respond to the Purpose and Need for the action request. The selection of the Proposed Action supports the ongoing residential and commercial development in south Utah County. The conversion of water use would not directly impact land use but would provide flexibility for potential future growth and development.

Water Resources: The Proposed Action would not significantly impact water resources. Conversion of water use from irrigation to M&I purposes would not result in additional depletions from the hydrologic system. The operational patterns and timing of water releases would continue as they have historically.

Wetlands: The Proposed Action would not significantly impact wetland ecosystems. Water feeding wetlands would generally remain unchanged, ensuring their continued support and functionality.

Soils and Farmland: The Proposed Action would not directly impact soils and farmland. Agricultural producers would continue to have access to water for irrigation purposes, ensuring the continued productivity of farmland. Prime and Unique farmlands as designated by the United States Department of Agriculture are located within the delineated project area and the acreage of those lands was disclosed within the EA. Reclamation considered the potential effects of the Proposed Action on these lands. As stated within the analysis of the EA, the Proposed Action does not influence the trend of land conversion within Utah County – development is occurring and will continue to occur regardless of the implementation of this Proposed Action.

Floodplains: The Proposed Action would not significantly impact floodplain ecosystems. The water feeding floodplain management would generally remain unchanged, and the functionality of floodplains in regulating water flow and mitigating flood risks would remain unchanged. Findings from the Utah Department of Natural Resources Water Resources Plan (2021) referenced in the EA supports Reclamation's internal analysis that no significant impact is expected to occur from the implementation of the Proposed Action.

Climate Change: Cumulative impacts on climate change from the Proposed Action and other ongoing projects in the SVP Service Area are expected to be minimal. The Proposed Action allows for the flexible use of water resources, which can enhance resilience to climate change by supporting sustainable water management practices. Although climate change impacts, such as increased temperatures and altered precipitation patterns, are challenges, the Proposed Action would help mitigate these effects by ensuring a stable water supply. These adaptations would be part of a larger regional strategy to address climate change, and the Proposed Action alone would not significantly change the overall climate change impacts.

Threatened and Endangered Species: The Proposed Action would have no significant impact on threatened and endangered species. Suitable habitats within the SVP Service Area would continue to be supported by the existing hydrological regime. Reclamation would continue diligence under the ESA for future projects within the SVP project conversion area. The agency No Affect rationale stated within the EA is based on available

science and current ESA policy for the species listed within the EA. Internal wildlife specialists considered potential beneficial as well adverse effects in reaching the conclusion for the stated determination.

Cultural Resources: This project has no potential to cause effects to historic properties because there is no ground disturbance and availability of water will not be altered. SHPO concurred with Reclamation's determination.

Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics: Utilizing the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool provided additional support for Reclamation's internal analysis determination. The project will not disproportionately impact any groups or communities because there is no direct land use change from the Proposed Action at this time. Not implementing the Proposed Action, may negatively impact all communities including EJ communities requiring M&I water within the project area. Proposed Action is expected to have positive socioeconomic impacts by providing a reliable water supply for future growth and development in south Utah County based on the disclosed analysis within the EA and the current population estimates for future growth (Gardner Institute 2022). While the Proposed Action would contribute positively to local economic development, it would not significantly alter the broader socioeconomic trends already underway in the region because development would continue to occur under the No Action. However, the EJ screening tool indicates that approximately 1/3 of Utah County may be below the median income of the United States; the execution of the Proposed Action will likely provide additional municipal water in the future for many in this population demographic.

Decision

Reclamation has worked with the SWUA and the SVP contract holders to generate a long-term solution that would provide them with additional flexibility in the use of the 1991 Contract Water and SVP High Flow Water. The Proposed Action allows SVP contract holders to move forward into the future and be compliant with Reclamation law and policy. The Proposed Action to convert the water from irrigation to miscellaneous purposes will not significantly affect the human or natural environment as summarized above.

Furthermore, the Proposed Action meets the purpose and need identified for the project and discussed in this EA. The No Action does not meet Reclamation's purpose or need for the project. Based on the lack of significant effects to the human environment and because the No Action does not meet the purpose and need of the project, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action as described in the attached Final EA.

Rick Baxter; Area Manager
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Date