

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Reclamation****San Luis Unit Long-Term Contract Renewals**

AGENCY: Bureau of Reclamation, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of the draft environmental impact statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended) and the California Environmental Quality Act, the Bureau of Reclamation has made available for public review and comment a Draft EIS for the renewal of long-term water service contracts for the San Luis Unit of the Central Valley Project (CVP). The Draft EIS describes and presents the environmental effects of three alternatives, including no action, for implementing the renewal of the long-term water service contracts. A 45-day public comment period will be allowed to receive comments from individuals and organizations on the Draft EIS.

DATES: Written comments on the Draft EIS will be accepted on or before January 24, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Send comments on the Draft EIS to Joe Thomson, Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Region, 1243 "N" Street, Fresno, CA 93644.

Copies of the Draft EIS may be requested from Ms. Sammie Cervantes, Bureau of Reclamation, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825 or by calling 916-978-5104, TDD 916-978-5608. See Supplementary Information section for locations where copies of the Draft EIS are available for public inspection.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joe Thompson, Environmental Specialist, Bureau of Reclamation, at 559-487-5179.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Draft EIS will address impacts related to the renewal of long-term water service contracts between Reclamation and the contractors in the San Luis Unit. The alternatives present a range of water service agreement provisions that could be implemented for long-term contract renewals. The first alternative, the No-Action Alternative, consists of renewing water service contracts as described by the preferred alternative of the Programmatic EIS for the Central Valley Project Improvement Act. A proposal by Reclamation was submitted to the contractors in 1999 with an alternative contract being submitted by the contractors in 2000. Reclamation and the contractors have continued to

negotiate the CVP-wide terms and conditions with these proposals serving as the basis for analysis of such "bookends." The EIS also evaluates the proposals against the No-Action Alternative as bookends to be considered for the environmental documentation that evaluates the impacts and benefits of renewing the long-term water service contracts.

Copies of the Draft EIS are available for public inspection and review at the following locations:

- Bureau of Reclamation, Denver Office Library, Building 67, Room 167, Denver Federal Center, 6th and Kipling, Denver, CO 80225; telephone: 303-445-2072.

- Bureau of Reclamation, Office of Public Affairs, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825-1898; telephone: 916-978-5100.

- Bureau of Reclamation, South Central California Area Office, 1243 "N" Street, Fresno, CA 93721.

- Natural Resources Library, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW., Main Interior Building, Washington, DC 20240-0001.

Public Libraries:

- Fresno County Public Library, 2420 Mariposa Street, Fresno, CA 93721.

- Los Banos Public Library, 1312 S. 7th Street, Los Banos, CA 93635.

Oral and written comments, including names and home addresses of respondents will be available for public review. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from public disclosure, which will be honored to the extent allowable by law. There may be circumstances in which respondent's identity may also be withheld from public disclosure, as allowable by law. If you wish to have your name and/or address withheld, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public disclosure in their entirety.

Dated: September 28, 2004.

John F. Davis,

Deputy Regional Director, Mid-Pacific Region.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Reclamation****Mendota Pool Ten-Year Exchange Agreements, Proposed Annual Water Exchange, California**

AGENCY: Bureau of Reclamation, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of the final environmental impact statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: The Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has prepared a final EIS, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to evaluate the proposed annual water exchange agreements of up to 25,000 acre-feet of water per year for up to a 10-year period with the Mendota Pool Group.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide water to irrigable lands on Mendota Pool Group properties in Westlands Water District and San Luis Water District to offset substantial reductions in contract water supplies attributable to the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA), the Endangered Species Act listings and regulations, and new Bay-Delta water quality rules. This water would thereby enable the Mendota Pool Group farmers to maintain production on historically irrigated lands. The project is not intended to increase the amount of water for farming activities, but would replace some of the contract water lost because of increased environmental regulations that restrict water deliveries south of the export pumps at Tracy, California.

DATES: Reclamation will not make a decision on the proposed action until at least 30 days after release of the Final EIS/EIR. After the 30-day waiting period, Reclamation will complete a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD will state the action that will be implemented and will discuss all factors leading to the decision.

ADDRESSES: The final EIS may be obtained by contacting Mr. David Young at the Bureau of Reclamation, South-Central California Area Office, 1243 N Street, Fresno, CA 93721-1813; by telephone at 559-487-5127; (TDD 559-487-5933); by e-mail at dkyoung@mp.usbr.gov; or by fax at 559-487-5397. The final EIS is also available via the Internet at <http://www.usbr.gov/mp/sccao/index.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Young, Environmental Specialist, at the above address or by telephone at 559-487-5127 (TDD 559-487-5933).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Delta export service area of the Central Valley

Project (CVP) has total contractual obligations and delivery losses of approximately 3.45 million acre-feet per year. The theoretical maximum pumping capability of CVP facilities serving this area is approximately 3.09 million acre-feet per year. Available supplies are apportioned under a hierarchy of allocation in which agricultural water service contracts, totaling about 1.85 million acre-feet per year, are provided water only after all other obligations are met.

Implementation of the CVPIA (1992), Endangered Species Act (1993–1995), and revised Bay-Delta water quality standards have further reduced pumping capabilities and water supplies available to agricultural contractors. Currently agricultural contractors can expect to receive a long-term average supply of about 50 to 55 percent of contract water as compared to a pre-1992 average of 88 to 92 percent.

Alternatives identified and evaluated, based on criteria adopted to maintain environmental quality, provide for continued agricultural production and include the proposed project, construction of new wells, and fallowing of farmland. The project proponents propose to pump up to 269,600 acre-feet of groundwater over the 10-year period from non-CVP wells located adjacent to the Mendota Pool into the Mendota Pool to make up for a portion of the annual shortfall in the contract water to be delivered via the CVP. The actual quantity of water to be pumped would depend on whether the year is classified as wet (0 acre-feet per year), normal (maximum of 31,600 acre-feet per year), or dry (maximum of 40,000 acre-feet per year). As part of this program, a maximum of 12,000 acre-feet per year of groundwater would be pumped from deep wells (*i.e.*, screened interval greater than 130 feet deep), with the remainder coming from shallow wells (*i.e.*, screened interval less than 130 feet deep). The proposed project will comply with the terms specified in the *Settlement Agreement for Mendota Pool Transfer Pumping Program*, effective January 1, 2001.

The Federal action contemplated in the EIS is the exchange with Reclamation of a maximum of 25,000 acre-feet of the total quantity pumped each year. This water would be made available to Reclamation in the Mendota Pool to offset their existing water contract obligations. In exchange, Reclamation would make an equivalent amount of CVP water available to the members of the Mendota Pool Group for irrigation purposes at Check 13 of the Delta-Mendota Canal. Any quantity of water pumped by the Mendota Pool

Group beyond the 25,000 acre-feet exchanged is not part of the Federal action, but is evaluated in the EIS. The water pumped in excess of the 25,000 acre-feet exchanged with Reclamation would be delivered directly to other lands that are presently under irrigation around the Pool.

The primary environmental resource issues that are evaluated in the EIS include groundwater levels, groundwater quality, subsidence, surface water quality, and biological resources. Other resource areas evaluated include cost of water, CVP operations, archaeological and cultural resources, Indian Trust assets, environmental justice, socioeconomic resources, land use, transportation, air quality, and noise.

There are no known Indian Trust Assets or environmental justice issues associated with the proposed action.

Reclamation published the notice of availability of the draft EIS in the **Federal Register** on Tuesday, July 29, 2003 (68 FR 44542). The 60-day written comment period ended on September 29, 2003. Reclamation obtained public input on the scope of the project and potential alternatives through solicitation of comment letters and a public scoping meeting. Ten comment letters were received. The final EIS addresses the comments received on the draft EIS both as revisions to the text, and in an appendix that provides specific responses to each comment.

It is Reclamation's practice to publicly disclose respondents' comments, including names and addresses. Respondents may request that their address be withheld from disclosure; this will be honored to the extent allowable by law. There may also be circumstances in which a respondent's identity may be withheld from disclosure; again, this will be honored to the extent allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. All submissions from organizations or businesses will be publicly disclosed in their entirety.

Dated: November 29, 2004.

Kirk C. Rodgers,

Regional Director, Mid-Pacific Region.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Reclamation

Change in Discount Rate for Water Resources Planning

AGENCY: Bureau of Reclamation, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of change.

SUMMARY: The Water Resources Planning Act of 1965 and the Water Resources Development Act of 1974 require an annual determination of a discount rate for Federal water resources planning. The discount rate for Federal water resources planning for fiscal year 2005 is 5.375 percent. Discounting is to be used to convert future monetary values to present values.

DATES: This discount rate is to be used for the period October 1, 2004, through and including September 30, 2005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sandra L. Simons, Manager, Contract Services Office, Denver, Colorado, 80225; telephone: 303-445-2902.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Notice is hereby given that the interest rate to be used by Federal agencies in the formulation and evaluation of plans for water and related land resources is 5.375 percent for fiscal year 2005.

This rate has been computed in accordance with Section 80(a), Pub. L. 93-251 (88 Stat 34) and 18 CFR 704.39, which: (1) Specify that the rate shall be based upon the average yield during the preceding fiscal year on interest-bearing marketable securities of the United States which, at the time the computation is made, have terms of 15 years or more remaining to maturity (average yield is rounded to nearest one-eighth percent); and (2) provide that the rate shall not be raised or lowered more than one-quarter of 1 percent for any year. The Treasury Department calculated the specified average to be 5.088 percent. Rounding this average yield to the nearest one-eighth percent is 5.125 percent, which exceeds the permissible one-quarter of 1 percent change from fiscal year 2004 to 2005. Therefore, the change is limited to one-quarter of 1 percent.

The rate of 5.375 percent shall be used by all Federal agencies in the formulation and evaluation of water and related land resources plans for the purpose of discounting future benefits and computing costs or otherwise converting benefits and costs to a common time basis.