



— BUREAU OF —  
RECLAMATION

**Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record**

# **Friant-Kern Canal Pump-Back Project**

**Interior Region 10 – California Great Basin**

ED Tracking #: CGB-ED-2025-137

Prepared and Recommended by:

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**September 2025**

## **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, Native Hawaiians, 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.

# Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to examine the potential effects to the environment associated with Reclamation's proposed action to approve Friant Water Authority (FWA) access to the project footprints located on Reclamation land and provide funding for the construction and installation of two seasonal pump-back facilities at Shafter Check Structure and Lake Woollomes Check Structure on the Friant-Kern Canal (FKC) in Kern County. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) follows implementation regulations for an EA described in 43 CFR Part 46 and the Department of the Interior Handbook of NEPA Implementation Procedures (516 DM 1). This FONSI is supported by Reclamation's Friant-Kern Canal Pump-Back Project EA (EA Number CGB-ED-2025-137), incorporated here by reference.

## Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve capacities of reverse flow pump-back facilities along the southern portion of the FKC to enhance water management in accordance with the Secure Water Act [Public Law 111-11, Title IX, Subtitle F, Section 9504 (a)(1)(C) and (D)], appropriations for Western Drought Response (Public Law 113-235), and recirculate recaptured Restoration Flows in accordance with the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act [Public Law 111-11, Title X, Subtitle A, Section 10004(a)(4) and Section 10201(a)(2)].

As described in the Stipulation of Settlement in *Natural Resources Defense Council, et al. v. Kirk Rodgers et al.* (Settlement), release of Restoration Flows may result in adverse water supply impacts to the Friant Contractors. Also, severe periods of drought in California, particularly in the last two decades, have had serious consequences for water supply reliability in the region. Therefore, the proposed action is needed to improve water supply reliability and water deliveries to reduce the impacts to local economies in the region and reduce or avoid Friant Contractor water supply impacts resulting from the release of Restoration Flows in accordance with the Settlement. Increased FKC reverse pumping capacities would allow better management of and access to banked water, transfers, exchanges, other acquired supplies, and recaptured Restoration Flows.

## **Proposed Action**

Reclamation proposes to approve FWA access to the project footprints located on Reclamation land and provide funding for the construction and installation of two seasonal pump-back facilities. The seasonal pump-back facilities would support the conveyance of recaptured Restoration Flows and other acquired Central Valley Project (CVP) and non-CVP waters to Friant Contractors via the FKC, in accordance with Paragraph 16(a) of the Settlement; Part III, Section 10201(a)(2) of the Settlement Act; the Secure Water Act, and appropriations for Western Drought Response included in Public Law 113-235.

Under the proposed action, a four-bay seasonal check structure with up to 200 cubic feet per second (cfs) capacity would replace the existing temporary pump-back facility at the Shafter Check Structure, and a two-bay seasonal check structure with up to 75 cfs capacity would replace the existing temporary pump-back facility at the Lake Woollomes Check Structure. These pump-back facilities would be removed at the end of each seasonal period and installed again at the beginning of the following season. The seasonal facilities would be operated when recaptured Restoration Flows and the other sources of water are available and generally taken offline and removed outside of the irrigation season (November to February). This provides the flexibility to demobilize the seasonal pump-back facilities at Shafter Check Structure and Lake Woollomes Check Structure outside of the primary operational window, thereby allowing for regular gravity flow operations within the FKC to support flood safety operations.

The seasonal pump-back facilities that would be installed are retrofitted pumps that Reclamation previously acquired from the Red Bluff Diversion Dam when the Interim Pumping Facility was decommissioned in 2014. The seasonal pump-back facilities would be placed at the same location as the existing temporary check structures at Shafter and Lake Woollomes. Permanent electric power is present at both the Shafter and Lake Woollomes Check Structures; however, it is only sufficient to operate one 50 cfs pump at each site. For the remaining capacity, additional permanent power would be installed, or diesel generators would be used, to power pumps for the duration of the seasonal operation.

Based on the analysis documented in the EA, the proposed action would involve only minor, short-term, construction and operational activities that would not result in permanent nor significant adverse impacts to natural or cultural resources and would

have beneficial impacts to the regional economy as well as to the quality of life of the American people.

## **Mitigation, Monitoring, and Enforcement**

Mitigation measures to avoid and minimize potential adverse impacts to the extent feasible that will be implemented by FWA as part of the proposed action are described in Appendix A, *Environmental Commitments*, of the EA. Reclamation will monitor and enforce implementation of these environmental commitments as documented by FWA. The authority to implement these measures is derived from the California Environmental Quality Act, Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

## **Finding**

The EA evaluated the reasonably foreseeable effects of the proposed action as compared to the no action alternative.

In determining the degree of significance, the following were considered:

1. Short-and long-term effects; As described in Section 3 of the EA, potential effects of implementing the proposed action include:
  - a. Minimal short-term effects to geology, soils, paleontological resources, noise and vibration, air quality, traffic and transportation, and utilities.
  - b. Short-term effects to cultural resources, biological resources, hydrology and water resources (surface and groundwater) that would be minimal with the implementation of environmental commitments.
  - c. Minimal to no long-term effects to cultural resources, biological resources, noise and vibration, air quality, traffic and transportation, and utilities.
2. Beneficial and adverse effects; Potential adverse effects would be as described above. As described in Sections 3.2 and 3.6 of the EA, respectively, potential long-term beneficial effects to geology and soils (associated with reduced land subsidence) and hydrology and water resources (associated with groundwater supply) would be anticipated to occur with implementation of the proposed action.
3. Effects on public health and safety; As described in Section 3.4 of the EA, impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials and public health and safety

associated with implementing the proposed action would be minimal with the implementation of the environmental commitments as referenced above.

4. Economic effects; As described in Section 4.3 of the EA, implementation of the proposed action would result in beneficial regional socioeconomic effects in the Friant Division.
5. Effects on the quality of life of the American people; As described above, while implementation of the proposed action would have the potential for minimal short term adverse effects, it would also be associated with long term beneficial effects on the quality of life of the American people related to geology and soils and hydrology and water resources.

As described in Section 4.4 of the EA, Reclamation coordinated with the appropriate federal, state, and local entities in preparing this analysis and finding. Reclamation reviewed the proposed action for conformance with land use plans. Reclamation has completed documentation of compliance with laws pertinent to the decision, including:

- National Historic Preservation Act
  - As described in Section 4.4.2 of the EA, Reclamation determined a finding of no adverse effect to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.5(b). The State Historic Preservation Office responded with no objections to Reclamation's findings and determination on August 26, 2025, completing the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation process. Therefore, Reclamation has determined the proposed action would have no significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Endangered Species Act
  - As described in Section 4.4.3 of the EA, Reclamation requested informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on the effects of the proposed action on San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*) (SJKF), Tipton kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys nitratooides nitratooides*) (TKR), Kern mallow (*Eremalche kernensis*), and San Joaquin Woolly-Threads (*Monolopia [Lembertia] congdonii*) in accordance with Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act on August 1, 2025. On September 11, 2025, the Service concurred with Reclamation's determination that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, SJKF, TKR, Kern mallow, or San Joaquin Woolly-Threads. As described in Sections 4.4.3 and 4.4.4, respectively, of the EA, the proposed action would not affect listed anadromous fish or Essential Fish Habitat, and thus, consultation with

National Marine Fisheries Service is not required for the proposed action. Therefore, Reclamation has determined the proposed action would have no significant impacts on special status species.

Reclamation provided the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft EA between June 26, 2025, and July 25, 2025. One comment letter was received from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The response to the comment letter is provided in Appendix G of the Final EA. Response to the comment letter resulted in no changes to the EA.

After consideration of the information described above and analysis contained within the EA, Reclamation finds that the proposed action would not have a significant impact on the human environment.

## Decision

Based on the analysis of the proposed action in the Friant-Kern Canal Pump-Back Project EA (CGB-ED-2025-137), Reclamation has decided to select the proposed action for implementation. The Selected Alternative best meets the purpose of and need for the proposal: to improve capacities of reverse flow pump-back facilities along the southern portion of the FKC and improve water supply reliability and water deliveries to reduce the impacts to local economies and reduce or avoid Friant Contractor water supply impacts resulting from the release of Restoration Flows and recent drought conditions in the region. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the proposed action are adopted with this decision. This document certifies that Reclamation has considered all relevant information raised in the NEPA process and that the NEPA process has concluded. The Responsible Official has decided to adopt the FONSI.

Certified by:

Donald E. Portz, Ph.D.

San Joaquin River Restoration Program

Interior Region 10- Great Basin, Bureau of Reclamation

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