**Department of Energy**
Western Area Power Administration
Sierra Nevada Customer Service Region
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**
**Western Area Power Administration**

# Transmission Line and Interconnection to Contra Costa Water District's Alternative Intake Project, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, California

## Final
## Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
## and Floodplain Statement of Findings

***Summary:*** This notice provides Western Area Power Administration's (Western's) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) determination regarding Western's proposal to provide an electric transmission line and interconnection to Contra Costa Water District's (CCWD's) Alternative Intake Project (AIP) located in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, within San Joaquin and Contra Costa Counties, California. Under the Proposed Action, Western would provide electric service to the AIP power substation for operating AIP project facilities, including the new pump station on Victoria Canal, while minimizing costs and environmental effects.

The Proposed Action would make the AIP a new point of delivery on Western's system for delivery of project power for pumping a portion of CCWD's Central Valley Project (CVP) water supply from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), and also for delivery of power from third party providers under Western's Open Access Transmission Tariff for pumping of non-CVP water. This arrangement would be similar to CCWD's other intake facilities with Reclamation and Western, and would offset some of the existing power usage by CCWD at Old River Pump Station. The AIP would be a new point of delivery for project power. Western would be responsible for constructing, operating, and maintaining the Proposed Action.

Based on the analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA), Western has determined that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human and natural environment, within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

affecting the quality of the human and natural environment, within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required and Western is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The Proposed Action to install and maintain power poles and transmission lines within a 50-foot-wide transmission right-of-way (ROW) corridor would result in potential environmental effects that have been addressed through the incorporation of conservation measures into the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action is located on Victoria Island which, except for its levees, is within the 100-year floodplain of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Therefore, a Statement of Findings is also included that there is no practicable alternative that would meet the purpose and need other than the Proposed Action of installing and maintaining the power poles and transmission lines within this floodplain, along State Route (SR) 4 and existing dirt roads.

***For Copies and Further Information, Contact:*** For copies of this FONSI or the EA, contact Ms. Cherie Johnston-Waldear, Project Manager, Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Regional Office, 114 Parkshore Drive, Folsom, CA 95630-4710; telephone number (916) 353-4035; email waldear@wapa.gov.

***Supplementary Information and Findings:*** Western owns and operates seven transmission lines in the Sacramento Valley of California. The EA examines the impacts of installing and maintaining a transmission line and interconnection between Western's transmission system and CCWD's AIP.

NEPA regulations provide for the identification and elimination from detailed study the issues that are not significant or that have been covered by prior environmental review (40 CFR 1501.7[a][3]).

Based on Western's review of information obtained during initial scoping with the public and government agencies, and information obtained through literature review, agency correspondence, consultations, and field data collection, Western determined that the Proposed Action would not significantly affect the following four resources, which were not evaluated in detail in the EA:

**Mineral Resources**: The Proposed Action would not affect any known sand, gravel, natural gas, gold, or silver areas or result in the loss of availability of any known mineral resource.

**Population and Housing**: The Proposed Action would not directly or indirectly result in population growth through the provision of new homes, new businesses, or in any other manner or displace existing housing or people.

**Public Services**: The Proposed Action would not directly or indirectly result in population growth and therefore would not increase short- or long-term demand for public services, including fire and police protection, additional schools, parks, and other public facilities.

**Transportation Resources**: The Proposed Action would result in minor additional traffic within the project site during construction as construction vehicles go to and from the site. Additionally, a very small increase in traffic for periodic operations and maintenance visits would be expected. With the implementation of a traffic control and safety assurance plan, all potential impacts on transportation are less than significant.

The Proposed Action analyzed in the EA would cause limited, short-term construction impacts to land use, habitats and vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, geology and soils, air quality, water quality, public health, recreation, cultural resources, and aesthetics. These effects would include noise, dust, erosion, storm water runoff, localized habitat changes, visual effects from the 3.6-mile-long transmission line, and short-term disturbances of wildlife. Long-term effects due to operations and maintenance would be similar, but much less than during construction. Western has fully evaluated these and other potential environmental effects. In accordance with NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the AIP Transmission Line and Interconnection EA, Western finds that the Proposed Action, with conservation measures included in the EA, will not result in significant impacts to the environment. The finding is supported by the following:

**Land Use**

The transmission line steel support structures (8- to 10-foot-square base) on each side of Old River would potentially affect a very small portion of agricultural land adjacent to Old River. Except for these structures, the transmission line poles would be located adjacent to the existing dirt roads providing farm access. These impacts to land uses would be less than significant.

**Habitats and Vegetation**

The two transmission line steel support structures on each side of Old River and the transmission lines poles would be sited such that they would not result in fill of jurisdictional waters and loss of sensitive habitat.

Conservation measures, including pre-construction surveys for special-status plants and compensation for any loss if required, result in these impacts to habitats and vegetation being less than significant.

## Wildlife

Potential impacts during construction and operation could have a significant effect on the following special-status species: giant garter snake; Swainson's hawk, white-tailed kite, northern harrier, and other raptors; burrowing owl; and tricolored blackbird. Conservation measures including pre-construction surveys for special-status plants and animals, following Avian Protection Plan guidelines for powerlines to the extent feasible, and implementing the Proposed Action consistent with the biological opinion received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the AIP, including the transmission line and interconnection, render all impacts to a less-than-significant level.

## Fisheries

Construction and operation activities could potentially impact the following special-status species: winter-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley fall/late fall-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead, delta smelt, longfin smelt, green sturgeon, river lamprey, hardhead, and Sacramento splittail.

The Proposed Action should not affect fisheries resources since the transmission line structures will not be located within the Old River levees, conservation measures are in place to minimize temporary degradation of surface water quality from construction activities, and the Proposed Action will be implemented consistent with biological opinions received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for the AIP, including the transmission line and interconnection. For these reasons the impact would be less than significant.

## Geology and Soils

The Proposed Action could result in potentially significant impacts related to geologic hazards resulting from seismically induced or soil-related structural failure of proposed facilities, but these potential impacts are less than significant with the proposed conservation measures. Strong ground shaking could result in equipment or structural failure of the transmission poles and lines. However, the risk of exposing people or structures to substantial or long-term service disruption is low. The potential impacts would be of limited occurrence, duration, and intensity and would be less than significant.

Construction activities would involve grading and excavation along the dirt access roads. Soils present at the proposed project site are rated as having a slight hazard of water erosion. The hazard of wind erosion, however, is listed as moderate to severe for soils at the project site. Construction would include standard best management practices, such as applying water or other dust minimization techniques as necessary to prevent or alleviate dust

nuisance generated by construction activities, or covering small stockpiles of earth. For this reason, it is not expected that wind-caused erosion on the project site would be greater than existing erosion under farming operations and the indirect impact would be less than significant.

**Air Quality**

The Proposed Action could result in significant direct impacts related to generation of short-term construction-related air pollutant emissions and odorous emissions, but conservation measures developed in association with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District render these impacts to be less than significant.

**Water Quality**

Temporary degradation of surface water quality as a result of contaminant releases and runoff could occur during construction, but conservation measures minimizing these effects result in impacts that are less than significant.

**Public Health**

Public health hazards, such as effects from hazardous materials, potential wildfire, pesticide exposure to construction workers from adjacent agricultural practices, and short-term construction noises, were all less than significant with proposed conservation measures. Coordination with the applicable land owners and land managers would ensure that temporary construction workers and Western personnel are not exposed to harmful levels of pesticides from adjacent agricultural activities.

**Recreation**

There would be no recreation facilities affected, and no temporary or long-term changes in recreation opportunities (primarily boating in Old River and Victoria Canal).

**Cultural Resources**

Surveys have concluded that there are no cultural resources or historic properties at the project site. The Proposed Action could result in potentially significant impacts related to damage to or destruction of undiscovered cultural resources and discovery of human remains during construction within the proposed 50-foot-wide transmission line ROW; however, cultural resources-related conservation measures will be implemented so these impacts would be less than significant

**Aesthetics**

The proposed new transmission poles would be constructed of materials such as wood or non-glare steel that would not create a new source of substantial light or glares that would affect day or nighttime views in the area. New lighting may be installed as part of the new transmission poles for security and safety; however, directional shielding and other such measures would be implemented to minimize the encroachment of project-related lighting to nearby land uses. For this reason, and because of the proposed project site's distance from sensitive receptors, this impact would be less than significant.

Western also studied the No-Action Alternative. Under the No-Action Alternative, no additional facilities would be constructed and no existing facilities would be altered, expanded, or demolished. However, the No-Action Alternative does not meet the purpose and need of the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action would not violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment, to the extent applicable to Federal projects. All permits are in place or will be secured prior to construction.

***Floodplain Statement of Findings:*** This is a Floodplain Statement of Findings prepared in accordance with 10 CFR Part 1022. Western proposes to install transmission line poles along existing access roads. The minor changes caused by the transmission line poles would have an insignificant effect on floodwater flow and on the ability of the floodplain to store water. Victoria Island is nearly level, encircled by levees, and ranges in elevation from approximately 9 to 14 feet below sea level. A 100-year flood, such as one caused by a levee breach, would be anticipated to inundate the entire island and would not be significantly affected by the presence of additional power poles. The Proposed Action has essentially no effect on the floodplain, flood hazards, or floodplain management. The Proposed Action conforms to applicable State or local floodplain protection standards to the extent applicable to Federal projects.

Western will allow 30 days of public review after publication of this FONSI and Statement of Findings before implementing the Proposed Action.

***Determination:*** Based on the information in the EA, as summarized here, Western determines that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human or natural environment within the meaning of NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). Therefore, an EIS will not be prepared and Western is issuing this FONSI.

Issued: _____

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Thomas R. Boyko
Regional Manager
Sierra Nevada Region