

Shafter~Wasco Irrigation District

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9/28/2020

October 2, 2020

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

Oct 05 2020

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Julie Vance
Regional Manager
State of California – Natural Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Wildlife – Central Region
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, California 93710

Subject: Shafter-Wasco Irrigation District Voluntary Rotational Land Fallowing Program Initial Study/ Negative Declaration State Clearinghouse No. 2020080457

Dear Ms. Vance:

The Shafter-Wasco Irrigation District (District) would like to thank you for your recent comments regarding the Shafter-Wasco Irrigation District Voluntary Rotational Land Fallowing Program Initial Study/ Negative Declaration (IS/ND) State Clearinghouse No. 2020080457 document.

The lands participating in the fallowing program have been actively farmed for many years, some with more than 50 years of agricultural production. The current agricultural practices of these farms, which include disking, plowing, planting, and harvesting and in some years resting the land (fallowing) will continue whether the farmers participate in the fallowing program or not. The fallowing program does not recommend or change baseline agricultural practices. In many cases, farmers participating in the program will continue normal agricultural practices by what is known as dry-farming, growing crops without providing additional water beyond what occurs naturally, thereby meeting the programs fallowing conditions.

Additionally, the program would not impact or alter any habitat or wildlife residing in or utilizing the Buttonwillow Preserve, located over a mile away from the active agricultural farms located in the MA-2 boundary.

As part of the conditions of the program, the District will insist on continued maintenance of the existing agricultural lands, using the same cultural practices that have been utilized for over 100-years. The program does not approve any changes in current land practices or approve any tree or vegetation removal outside of historically producing agricultural

lands. If the program conditions change in any way, the modified program will be reviewed in accordance with CEQA and include a thorough biological review.

The District has provided the appropriate fees of \$2,406.75 to the Kern County Clerk's Office. The District will continue to maintain a positive working relationship with CDFW and continue to be good stewards of the land and wildlife that are within the Districts' boundaries.

Thank you again for your comments.



Ken Bonesteel
MA-2 Manager
Shafter-Wasco Irrigation District