

NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Lead Agency – DUDLEY RIDGE WATER DISTRICT
KINGS COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Project Title: Adoption and Implementation of the 2020 Agricultural Water Management Plan

Project Description: The Dudley Ridge Water District (DRWD or District) proposes to adopt and implement the provisions of the 2020 Agricultural Water Management Plan (Plan). In the Plan, the District identified the need to improve the process for approving water transfers and exchanges among State Water Project (SWP or Project) contractors. As part of DRWD's review of the Plan along with one of the water management strategies identified in the Plan (i.e., streamlining the DWR approval process for water transfer water requests), DRWD is subjecting the Plan and the water transfers, exchanges, and banking operations described in the Plan to CEQA review. These water operations, as described in the Plan, include:

- Deliveries in and out of long-term banking and exchange programs (i.e., Kern Water Bank Authority, Cawelo Water Regulation Program, Semitropic Water Exchange, San Gabriel Valley Water Exchange, Irvine Ranch Water District's Strand Ranch and Stockdale Integrated Banking Projects, etc.);
- Deliveries in and out of short-term or spot market groundwater banking programs or exchanges (i.e., Rosedale Rio-Bravo Water Storage District, Central Coast Water Agency, etc.);
- Annual water purchases, including Dry Year Transfer Programs and purchases of non-Project water via the District or the Westside Districts;
- Multi-year water purchases of SWP or non-Project water via the District or the Westside Districts (i.e., Multi-Year Water Pool, Castaic Lake Water Agency, Western Hills Water District, etc.);
- Deliveries to or from other water districts that District landowners have agricultural landholdings, whereby annual water needs can be facilitated by transferring water within a common farming operation (located in multiple water districts) to balance their water supplies where it has the most economic benefit. Historically, common landowner transfers have occurred with member units of the Kern County Water Agency, Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District, Green Valley Water District, Westlands Water District, and various non-Project water districts located on the eastside of the southern San Joaquin Valley. Future common landowner transfers may be anticipated in other water districts in Kings, Kern, Tulare, Fresno, Merced and Madera counties where District landowners have landholdings and farming operations that involve SWP water or non-Project water;
- Transfers to/from other SWP contractors (or their member units) for annual or multi-year exchanges;
- Transfers to/from non-Project water purveyors for annual or multi-year exchanges;
- Transfers to/from other SWP contractors (or their member units) with established water banking or exchange programs;
- Transfers to/from CVP contractors (or their member units) with established water banking or exchange programs or for annual or multi-year purchases or exchanges;

- Transfers to/from non-Project (SWP or CVP) with established water banking or exchange programs or for annual or multi-year purchases or exchanges.

Project Location: The District is located in southern Kings County on the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley. The District lies south of Kettleman City and is bounded on the northeast by the Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District, on the south by the Kings-Kern County Line, and generally on the west by the Governor Edmund G. Brown California Aqueduct. Interstate 5 traverses the District in a northwest-southeast direction.

Environmental Finding: Although the District considers that adoption of the Plan is exempt from CEQA (see, for example, California Public Resources Code Sections 21080(c) and 21084, and California Code of Regulations Title 14, Sections 15061(b)(3), 15064(f)(3), 15070(a) and 15262), the District is providing CEQA documentation to ensure full public disclosure of its analysis and to assist other agencies, including the Department of Water Resources, for approvals to facilitate implementation of the water management strategies identified in the Plan. However, based on the environmental analysis performed and summarized in the attached Initial Study and Environmental Checklist, DRWD finds that the adoption and implementation of the 2020 Agricultural Water Management Plan will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment. The project will not result in any adverse effects which fall within the "Mandatory Findings of Significance" contained in Section 15065 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation measures are necessary.

This Negative Declaration was prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. A copy of the Initial Study upon which this Negative Declaration was based is available upon request at the District office on 286 W. Cromwell Ave., Fresno, CA 93711.

Submitted by:



Dale K. Melville, Assistant Manager-Engineer
Dudley Ridge Water District

7/14/2021

Date