



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
Mid-Pacific Regional Office  
2800 Cottage Way  
Sacramento, CA 95825-1898

IN REPLY REFER TO:

MP-170  
ENV-7.00

FEB 24 2016

## CERTIFIED-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Ms. Kaylee Allen  
Field Supervisor, Bay-Delta Office  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 8-300  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject:** Request for Formal Consultation Pursuant to Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act for the San Joaquin River Restoration Program Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Improvement Project

Dear Ms. Allen:

The Bureau of Reclamation requests initiation of formal consultation pursuant to Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the proposed Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Improvements Project (Proposed Action). The Proposed Action is identified in Paragraph 11(a) of the Settlement in *NRDC, et al., v. Rodgers, et al.* (Settlement):

*(1) Creation of a bypass channel around Mendota Pool to ensure conveyance of at least 4,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) from Reach 2B downstream to Reach 3. This improvement requires construction of a structure capable of directing flow down the bypass and allowing the Secretary to make deliveries of San Joaquin River water into Mendota Pool when necessary;*

*(2) Modifications in channel capacity (incorporating new floodplain and related riparian habitat) to ensure conveyance of at least 4,500 cfs in Reach 2B between the Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure and the new Mendota Pool bypass channel.*

Because the functions of these channels may be interrelated, the design, environmental compliance, and construction of the two are being addressed as one project. The Proposed Action would be implemented consistent with the Settlement and Public Law 111-11. The Mendota Pool Bypass would include conveyance of at least 4,500 cfs around Mendota Pool from Reach 2B to Reach 3. This action would also include constructing a bifurcation structure in Reach 2B to divert up to 2,500 cfs to the Mendota Pool. The bifurcation structure would be designed to direct fish into the bypass channel and minimize or avoid fish entrainment to the Mendota Pool.

Improvements to Reach 2B would include modifications to the San Joaquin River channel from the Chowchilla Bypass Bifurcation Structure to the Compact Bypass Bifurcation Structure to provide a capacity of at least 4,500 cfs, with integrated floodplain habitat. New levees would be constructed along Reach 2B to increase the channel capacity while allowing for new floodplain habitat.

The enclosed biological assessment (BA) analyzes the potential effects of the Proposed Action on special status species potentially occurring in the action area, including the Valley elderberry longhorn beetle

(*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*), Blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia sila*), Giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*), Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), Fresno kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys nitratoides*), San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*), California jewelflower (*Caulanthus californicus*), Palmate-bracted bird's beak (*Cordylanthus palmatus*), and San Joaquin woolly threads (*Monolopia (=Lembertia) congdonii*).

As further described in the enclosed BA, Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action:

- may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, Giant garter snake; and
- may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, Valley elderberry longhorn beetle, Blunt-nosed leopard lizard, Least Bell's vireo, Fresno kangaroo rat, San Joaquin kit fox, California jewelflower, Palmate-bracted bird's beak, and San Joaquin woolly threads.

Reclamation would appreciate the opportunity to review a draft biological opinion and incidental take statement within 90 days of receipt of this letter. If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Victorine, Natural Resources Specialist, at (916) 978-4624 or [rvictorine@usbr.gov](mailto:rvictorine@usbr.gov).

Sincerely,

  
FOR Alicia Forsythe  
Program Manager

Enclosure

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