



For Immediate Release:  
February 25, 2020

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## **FRIANT WATER AUTHORITY RECOGNIZES THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION ON FINALIZING NEW OPERATIONAL PLANS FOR THE CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT**

**Lindsay, CA** – Friant Water Authority (FWA) applauded the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) for recently signing the Record of Decision (ROD) on the Environmental Impact Statement for the long-term operations of the Federal and State water projects. By signing the ROD, Reclamation finalizes plans that allow federal and state agencies to operate Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) facilities in a manner that is protective of listed species while providing greater reliability for the projects' water users.

"Friant Water Authority is extremely thankful for the work of hundreds of planners, biologists, engineers, agency staff, stakeholders, and others who devoted more than three years to developing and reviewing these plans," said Jason Phillips, Chief Executive Officer of Friant Water Authority. "But we extend our greatest appreciation for two individuals involved in this process. Reclamation Commissioner Brenda Burman's steady leadership on this and other western water issues has been remarkable, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director for the Pacific Southwest Region Paul Souza. Paul's work ethic has been an example for all while executing on this effort after he was given the responsibility of being designated the project leader in the 2018 Presidential Memorandum on Western Water. Together, they showed tremendous leadership in ensuring these plans are scientifically sound, using the best available science, and were completed without major delays."

Reclamation initiated this consultation process under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with the National Marine Fisheries Service and USFWS in August 2016. The existing operational criteria for the CVP and SWP were established in the late 2000s, just before California experienced a record, multiyear drought and listed species in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) experienced further population declines. In the intervening years, the best available science on the needs of Delta-dependent species also progressed. The new operational plans finalized through the signing of the ROD incorporate this new understanding while allowing Federal agencies more flexibility in their actions to both protect fish and meet the needs of California water users and the communities they serve.

"We know that the operational criteria for the CVP and SWP under the 2008 and 2009 Biological Opinions failed on many levels. They failed to protect listed species, and they failed the water users of California, creating water shortages up and down the state," continued Phillips. "The announcement by the Bureau of Reclamation provides hope for the future."

Given the obvious water supply benefits, for people, farms, and the environment, that would result from the implementation of the new biological opinions, it is disappointing that the State of California

has decided to file a lawsuit in an attempt to block this much needed progress. The Friant Water Authority is hopeful that in the very near future, the State will drop its litigation and the important progress on the many water issues facing the people of California can proceed.