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FRIANT WATER AUTHORITY IS ONE STEP CLOSER TO FIXING THE FRIANT-KERN CANAL

Lindsay, CA – Today, the Friant Water Authority Board of Directors voted to finalize a cost-share agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) that details how the work to restore lost capacity in the Friant-Kern Canal will proceed and be funded. Reaching this important milestone clears the path for Reclamation to solicit construction bids with the goal of having a contractor selected around Summer 2021. Construction on Phase 1 of the project is expected to be completed in 2024. The Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project would restore capacity of up to 60% in certain areas where flow is severely constricted. The constriction is the result of land subsidence due to groundwater overdraft, largely from lands outside of the Central Valley Project Friant Division service area with no access to surface water supplies.

“The Friant Division began 70 years ago with a shared vision and investments in its collective future,” said Cliff Loeffler, Friant Water Authority Chairman. “Although challenging, it was important for Friant contractors to continue financing their portion of the Friant-Kern Canal repairs together, as a family, irrespective of being north or south of the pinch point. It’s our legacy and part of what makes the Friant Division special, unique, and solutions-oriented.”

Components of the Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project finance plan include:

- \$206 million in funding as part of the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations package passed by Congress and signed by President Donald Trump in December 2020;
- \$43 million from the San Joaquin River Restoration Program;
- A minimum of \$125 million in funding provided by a landmark agreement with the Eastern Tule Groundwater Sustainability Agency; and
- \$50 million in local funding provided by Friant-Kern Canal contractors.

The Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project will restore the canal’s design capacity through 30 miles of its most conveyance-restricted section near Terra Bella. State and Federal environmental reviews for the project were completed in September 2020 and the project’s Record of Decision was signed on November 4, 2020.

The Friant Division was designed in the early 20th century to function as a large-scale conjunctive use effort to stabilize groundwater supplies while meeting community and farm water needs on the San Joaquin Valley’s eastside. One of the Friant-Kern Canal’s primary functions is to deliver surface water to be used in lieu of groundwater or to recharge groundwater aquifers. As a result, restoring the capacity of the Friant-Kern Canal is critical to the southern San Joaquin Valley’s success in complying with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, in addition to achieving water quality and water supply goals for small, rural, or disadvantaged communities on the eastside.