CVPIA Refuge Water Supply Program Overview

# Background

The 1992 Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) created the Refuge Water Supply Program (RWSP), which includes 19 wetland habitat areas in the Central Valley. Prior to the enactment of CVPIA legislation most of these refuges relied upon surplus water, agricultural return flows, junior water rights and groundwater for their supply, all sources that were either unreliable or of marginal quality, or both. The RWSP’s overarching goal is to ensure that all CVPIA identified wetland habitat areas annually receive water of a specified quantity, of suitable flow rate and timing, and suitable quality to maintain and improve wetland habitat areas. CVPIA RWSP mandates are to acquire or secure the water supply necessary to meet delivery requirements, convey this water, and upgrade conveyance facilities or build new facilities.

# CVPIA RWSP Partners

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Grassland Resource Conservation District, and Central Valley Joint Venture (CVJV).

# CVPIA Wetland Habitat Areas

There are 19 wetland habitat areas included in the CVPIA RWSP. Twelve habitat areas are Federal National Wildlife Refuges/Units, 6 are State Wildlife Areas/Units, and 1 is a privately managed complex within the Grassland Resource Conservation District. Five CVPIA refuge units are located in the Sacramento Valley and the remaining 14 are in the San Joaquin Valley. Figure 1 shows a map with the locations of the CVPIA 19 wetland habitat areas.

# CVPIA Water Supply

Annually, Reclamation is required to provide 422,251 acre-feet of Level 2 water supplies for the RWSP. The Incremental Level 4 water supply requirement is an additional 133,264 acre-feet and each year Reclamation strives to provide as much Incremental Level 4 water as possible. Full level 4 water delivery totals 555,515 acre-feet and is satisfied when both Level 2 and Level 4 supply requirements are met in full. Almost all of the Level 2 requirement is secure and annually received by refuges, due to long-term contracts with Reclamation, but only 43% of Incremental Level 4 allocations were acquired and delivered each year (annual average from 2005-2014) from willing sellers. In most cases there are too few willing sellers, too little funding to buy their water, or both.

**Level 2 Water**: CVPIA obligates Reclamation to pay for acquisition and delivery of Level 2 water supplies for the 19 identified CVPIA wetland habitat areas. Level 2 water is the amount of water required for minimum wetlands and wildlife habitat management based on historic average annual water deliveries from 1977-1984. This is considered baseline supply and Reclamation pays for the entire cost. Level 2 supplies are provided primarily from the Central Valley Project.

**Incremental Level 4 Water**: Incremental Level 4 water is the additional amount of water identified for each refuge in CVPIA as required for optimum wetland and wildlife habitat development and management. Incremental Level 4 water supplies may be acquired through voluntary measures such as water conservation, conjunctive use, purchase, lease, donation, or similar activities. Currently four refuges are not able to receive Full Level 4 water based on incomplete water conveyance infrastructure: Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, Mendota Wildlife Area, Pixley National Wildlife Refuge, and Sutter National Wildlife Refuge.

# Cost Share Requirement

Only the acquisition and delivery of Incremental Level 4 water requires a State cost share of 25% for all 19 CVPIA habitat areas. Costs associated with the CVPIA RWSP require preparation of State-federal cost share “Task Orders” consistent with the Sharing of Costs Agreement for Mitigation Projects and Improvements (SCAMPI II). In order for expenditures to contribute to State cost share under the CVPIA RWSP, CDFW will need to include State expenditures in Task Orders, which identify final (actual) federal and state costs subject to Incremental Level 4 expenditures agreed to by State and federal partners.

# Annual Work Plans

Reclamation and the USFWS develop Annual Work Plans to disclose and solicit public feedback on activities planned for the upcoming federal fiscal year using the federal Central Valley Project Restoration Fund (Restoration Fund) and authorities under CVPIA. The Annual Work Plan identifies funding from the Restoration Fund and State cost-share for each program activity under CVPIA. Federal funding for CVPIA programs fluctuates annually based on federal appropriations. The RWSP identifies proposed activities and costs in the Annual Work Plan in partnership with State and federal partners, and the CVJV.

Figure 1. Map of CVPIA Refuges

