

**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**for**

**Joint Department of Energy/Bureau of Land Management  
Environmental Assessment for the Construction and Routine  
Operation of a 12-Kilovolt (kV) Overhead Powerline and  
Formal Authorization for a 10-inch and 8-inch Fresh Water  
Pipeline Right-of-Way at Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 1, Kern  
County, California**

**AGENCY:** U.S. Department of Energy

**ACTION:** Finding of No Significant Impact

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Energy (the Department), in conjunction with the Bureau of Land Management (the Bureau) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA-0962) to identify and evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the proposed construction and operation of a 1.62 mile, 12-kilovolt overhead powerline extension on and adjacent to the Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 1 (the Reserve) located about 35 miles west of Bakersfield, California. The Reserve is jointly owned and operated by the Federal government and Chevron U.S.A. Production Company. The Federal government owns about 78 percent of the Reserve, and Chevron owns the remaining 22 percent. The government's interest is under the jurisdiction of the Department.

In addition to crossing Reserve land, the powerline also would cross the Bureau's land, which requires a right-of-way agreement with the Bureau, Atlantic Richfield Company land, California Department of Transportation land, and West Kern Water District land. The proposed project would make it possible to obtain electric power for the Reserve's Section 5M fresh water pump station from the Reserve rather than to continue to purchase power at a more costly commercial rate from Pacific Gas and Electric Company as is currently done. The proposed project also includes the execution of an appropriate right-of-way agreement between the Department and the Bureau for existing fresh water pipelines that were installed on Bureau land by the Reserve in the mid-1970's but inadvertently an agreement was not signed. The Bureau has requested that such an agreement be executed. To facilitate the National Environmental Policy Act compliance effort, the Environmental Assessment (Assessment) was prepared by the Reserve as a joint Department and Bureau document with the Department as the lead federal agency and the Bureau as the cooperating agency.

The Assessment analyzes the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of the proposed action and the "no action" alternative. Two other alternatives were reviewed and eliminated from further consideration because they had the

potential for greater adverse ground impacts. There would be no potential impacts from the proposed project on employment, traffic, solid or hazardous waste generation, floodplains, wetlands or water quality. Potential impacts from the proposed project would be unlikely to jeopardize the continued existence of four federally listed threatened or endangered species found on and adjacent to the Reserve, and unlikely to affect the soils, air quality and cultural resources, all of which would be reduced through active mitigation.

Based on the analyses provided in the Assessment, the Department has determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and the Department is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact.

**PUBLIC AVAILABILITY:** The Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact will be distributed to persons and agencies requesting copies or known to be interested in or affected by the proposed action. Requests for copies should be made to:

Mr. Gary D. Walker  
National Environmental Policy Act  
Compliance Officer  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Naval Petroleum Reserves in California  
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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information on the Department's National Environmental Policy Act process, contact:

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**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:** The Reserve, also known as the Elk Hills oil field, was created by an Executive Order issued by President William H. Taft on September 2, 1912. Comprised of 47,409 acres in the southern San Joaquin Valley, it is surrounded on three sides by extensively developed oil and gas fields in production since the early 1900's. Extensively developed agricultural lands lie to the north and northeast of the Reserve. Except for national defense purposes, the facility was maintained in a reserve shut-in status until 1976. Since then, oil and gas production has been at the

maximum efficient rate, pursuant to the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-258) which was passed as the result of oil shortages in the 1970's. Since 1977, management has been under the authority of the Secretary of Energy pursuant to the Department's Organization Act (Public Law 95-91).

**THE PROPOSED ACTION:** The proposed action to construct and operate the 12 kilovolt overhead powerline extension involves installation of approximately 28 power poles along a 1.62 mile long by 20-foot wide right-of-way, and stringing and hanging associated powerlines from the Reserve's power grid to its fresh water pump station located adjacent to the Reserve in Section 5M. The proposed powerline extension would be routed from a transformer at an existing powerline on the Reserve and would terminate at the Reserve's fresh water pumps at the West Kern Water District's Station A in Section 5M. The electric motor driven fresh water pumps provide a pumping capacity up to 56,000 barrels of water per day for water purchased by the Reserve from the West Kern Water District to support a wide variety of uses at the Reserve, including potable drinking water, construction activities, process water, drilling operations, and fire protection. Connecting the Reserve's fresh water pumps to the Reserve's electrical distribution system would ultimately provide lower cost power. Currently, power for the 5M fresh water pumps is purchased from Pacific Gas and Electric Company using power meters located at the 5M site where the cost of power is relatively higher. The proposed action, when completed, would make it possible to obtain power for the 5M pumps from the Reserve, where the cost of power is significantly less expensive. The proposed action also includes the execution of an appropriate right-of-way agreement between the Department and the Bureau at the Bureau's request for the half mile section of existing fresh water pipelines (8-inch and 10-inch) that were installed on Bureau land by the Reserve in the mid-1970's that inadvertently has never been covered by a right-of-way agreement.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:** Three alternatives are considered in the Assessment. Under the "no action" alternative, the Reserve would continue to purchase power for the fresh water pumps at the 5M site from Pacific Gas and Electric Company at the more costly commercial rate. Under this alternative, the Reserve would not construct an overhead powerline extension from the existing Reserve power supply to the West Kern Water District Station A facility. Under this alternative, the Reserve also would continue to use the fresh water pipelines without a Bureau right-of-way authorization.

The remaining two alternatives considered in the Assessment are the Existing 10-Inch Water Line Proposal and the CALTRANS Proposal, Alternatives 1 and 2, respectively, both of which were reviewed and eliminated from further consideration. Alternative 1 would have required the existing 10-foot wide right-of-way for the Reserve fresh water lines to be expanded to a 40-foot wide right-of-way and authorization of the 8-inch and 10-inch water line right-of-way with the Bureau. Alternative 2 would have required a new 20-foot wide right-of-way to support placement of the proposed powerline and authorization of the 8-inch and 10-inch water line right-of-way with the Bureau. Both Alternatives 1 and 2 had potential for

greater adverse ground impacts in the short and long term than the proposed action.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:** Twelve environmental factors related to the proposed action evaluated in the Assessment include water resources, waste management, biota, geology and soils, air resources, visual resources, noise, floodplains and wetlands, cultural resources, land use, socioeconomics, and occupational health and safety.

Under the "no action" alternative, there would be no impacts or change to the present situation at the project site or to the surrounding area. However, under this alternative, the Reserve would not have the opportunity to save tax dollars with lower power rates. Cost savings resulting from the proposed action would be approximately \$15,000 per month. With the government's interest in the Reserve, 78 percent of these savings, or about \$11,700 per month that would accrue to the taxpayers would be foregone. Under this alternative, the resolution of the Reserve's unauthorized use of public land with a right-of-way authorization for the fresh water pipelines from the Bureau would also be foregone. The "no action" alternative would also result in a less reliable energy source because the Reserve would not have a back-up system in place if one power source failed.

Under the proposed action alternative, the powerline extension would furnish a net savings to the Federal government of \$11,700 per month. The Reserve's unauthorized use of public land with the fresh water pipelines would be resolved with the Bureau by the issuance of a right-of-way agreement. A more reliable energy source would also be provided by the powerline extension to better support the Reserve's pumping of fresh water purchased from the West Kern Water District. Drainages, floodplains, jurisdictional wetlands, and surface water quality would not be affected by the proposed action. Employment, traffic, and waste generation would be slightly greater under the proposed action compared to the "no action" alternative. Impacts on soils, air, and cultural resources would be unlikely and would be reduced through active mitigation. Potential effects to biota primarily would be minor loss and fragmentation of habitat, a small amount of mortality/injury mostly through vehicular collisions, and minor amounts of displacement of animals.


As part of this Assessment, a Biological Assessment and supplemental report was prepared, pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, which describes the effects of the proposed action on the federally endangered San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, Kern mallow, and the threatened Hoover's wooly-star. A consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service) was initiated and the Service issued a Biological Opinion which concluded that the proposed action is unlikely to jeopardize the continued existence of the four listed species that are found on and adjacent to the Reserve. The Department commits to compliance with all requirements in the Biological Opinion (see Appendix D for the Biological Opinion and Appendix C for the Mitigation Measures). The Department also initiated a consultation

with the California Department of Fish and Game under Section 2081 of the California Fish and Game Code. This consultation was necessary because the proposed powerline would cross the Atlantic Richfield Company Coles Levee Ecosystem Preserve which was established by Atlantic Richfield Company in accordance with certain agreements with California Department of Fish and Game. According to these agreements, the Reserve must complete a 2081 consultation before Atlantic Richfield Company can issue a right-of-way to the Reserve. For the proposed action, the Department would not make any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources until the state consultation has been concluded, and the state has issued a 2081 permit. The Department also commits to complying with all requirements in the 2081 Permit (see Appendix C for the Mitigation Measures).

**DETERMINATION:** Based on the analysis in the Assessment, the Department has determined that the proposed construction and operation of the 12-kilovolt overhead powerline and authorization of the fresh water pipelines right-of-way on and adjacent to the Reserve do not constitute major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and the Department is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact.

Issued at Naval Petroleum Reserve Number 1, Tupman, California,

OCT 20 1994, 1994



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Danny A. Hogan  
Director  
Naval Petroleum Reserves  
in California