

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission     Amended Submission

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**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

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**Central Valley Project: Planning and Construction of the First Four Divisions,  
1935-1956**

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**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

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(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

**CVP AUTHORIZATIONS, 1935-1937**

The geographical area for all contexts are the following California Counties: Alameda, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, Tehama, Trinity, Tuolumne, Yolo, and Yuba.

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**C. Form Prepared by**

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City or Town: Denver State: CO Zip Code: 80225-0007

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**D. Certification**

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bureau of Reclamation, Federal Preservation Officer  
Thomas Lincoln

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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functioning structures with components that need maintenance, repair, and replacement in order for them to continue to function smoothly and efficiently. Aspects of integrity that are secondarily important for powerplants to retain include setting, although eligible powerplants could lack this and still be considered an historic property.

**II. PROPERTY TYPE: WATER CONVEYANCE STRUCTURES****Description**

Another core component of the CVP are the conveyance systems used to carry water from the storage and diversion facilities to the farmlands, or to pumping plants for further geographical redistribution. The backbone of the conveyance system is comprised of the 500 miles of main canals. These include the Contra Costa Canal, Delta Cross Channel, Delta-Mendota Canal, Friant-Kern Canal, and Madera Canal. All main canals but the Delta Cross Channel and the first section of the Contra Costa Canal (near Rock Slough) are concrete lined. All of the main canals are typically defined to include operating roads on one or both sides of the canal prism. For the CVP, the water conveyance scope is huge: in addition to the over 500 miles of main canals, it contains thousands of miles of laterals (and sub- and sub-sub-laterals) that deliver water from the main canals to irrigation ditches on farms. Also falling within this property type are about 84 miles of drains that carry excess water away from farm fields.

Associated with the many miles of canals, laterals, and drains are numerous types of appurtenant features that play an integral role in water delivery. Most are small in scale, yet are instrumental in the functioning of canals and laterals. Although these appurtenant features are all thematically and operationally related to canals/laterals/drains, they can be divided into categories according to their purpose: conveyance, regulating, water measurement, protective, and miscellaneous structures. For the most part, these features derive significance as contributing elements to the

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operation of canals, laterals, and drains. Due to the small size of these features and the vast numbers of them, no comprehensive total breakdown is available. According to the National Register criteria, they would not be individually eligible, except in rare instances.

**A. Main Canals**

Construction on the first main canal of the CVP, the Contra Costa Canal of the Delta Division, commenced in 1937 and was completed in 1948. In 1940, construction began on the Madera Canal of the Friant Division, with construction completed in 1945. In 1945, construction on the Friant-Kern Canal began. The following year, construction on the Delta-Mendota Canal commenced. Finally, in 1950, construction on the Delta Cross Channel began. The Friant-Kern Canal, Delta-Mendota Canal, and Delta Cross Channel were all completed in 1951. The longest main canal is the Friant-Kern Canal at 151.8 miles, while the shortest is the Delta Cross Channel at 1.2 miles. All main canals are located on Reclamation fee title or easement land.

**Significance**

In conjunction with the storage and diversion dams, canals form the CVP's backbone. They provide the means to transfer, transport, and deliver water through the system and ultimately to the water users. Traveling for hundreds of miles, the canals form a significant feature of the physical landscape and define the geographical limits of the project. In keeping with the original CVP plan of large-scale water transfers, canals are the primary means behind the geographical redistribution of fresh water from the valley's wetter northern reaches to the drier southern stretches.

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**Figure 21: Friant-Kern Canal, Friant Division (Bureau of Reclamation, Jim Bailey)**

### **Registration Requirements**

The period of significance for historic water conveyance structures begins in 1937 with the initial construction of the first CVP canal, the Contra Costa Canal, and ends in 1951 with the completion of the Friant-Kern, Delta-Mendota, and Delta Cross Channel canals. Like the dams, these canals are part of the initial CVP authorizations. The main canals within the period of significance for this historic context are all considered individually eligible because of their primary role in operating the CVP. The main canals can be individually eligible for the National Register under one or more of the criteria, as follows:

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Criterion A: They have had a significant impact on the settlement, agricultural economy, or development patterns of the project area; they have been defining elements in the evolution of the cultural landscape; they are directly associated with important events.

Criterion B: They are the result of the direct efforts of a prominent individual associated with the CVP and are the most prominent feature associated with that individual.

Criterion C: They represent the distinctive characteristics of Reclamation canal design and/or methods of construction used on the CVP; they involved challenging engineering design problems due to topography, grade, length, natural obstacles, and resulted in complex or innovative solutions; they are among the best or a rare surviving example of a distinctive type of water conveyance structure; they represent the evolving technology in the design of water conveyance structures; they were identified during the construction period as a individually significant feature; or they embody the work of a significant engineer or builder.

Criterion D: They have the ability to yield information important to understanding the history of the CVP.

**Integrity**

The need for continual maintenance and repairs to canals requires special consideration of integrity. Irrigation systems are constantly evolving as features are upgraded, repaired, or replaced. Alterations made to canals during the period of significance and even subsequent to that may not nullify eligibility if a canal retains certain basics. Most important are integrity of location, association, and overall design configuration of the prism (i.e. depth and width). A canal which has retained its original form and associated appurtenant features has a high degree of integrity. It is not uncommon for a canal lining to be replaced, or for previously unlined

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segments to be lined. Such changes may not preclude a canal's eligibility if they do not significantly damage the canal's historic association or its overall design. If in addition to integrity of association, location, and overall design, the historical setting and feeling of a canal are maintained, then the likelihood is even higher that an altered canal would be eligible. On the other hand, if an entire canal is piped, it would no longer convey any of its original design, workmanship, materials, or historical association and would not be contributing. Conversely, partial piping of a significant canal may not preclude eligibility if a majority of a canal is still open and intact.

**B. Appurtenant Canal Features**

Although appurtenant canal features are all operationally and thematically related to canals, each feature type serves a specific purpose. These features can be divided into five categories of structures: conveyance, regulating, protective, water measurement, and bridges. The first four of these types were built to function as part of the canal, while the bridges were built to function independently of the canal.

*1. Conveyance Structures*

Conveyance structures are features such as inverted siphons, drops, chutes, flumes, tunnels, and pipelines that are used to safely transport water from one location to another traversing various existing natural and manmade topographic features along the way. There are two types of pipelines, those that carry water below ground and those that transport water above ground.

*2. Regulating Structures*

Regulating structures are used to raise, lower, or control the release and volume of the water flow. Regulating structures that are located at the source of the water supply include headworks and turnouts. Headworks control the release of water into the canal, and are often located