

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region

Record of Decision

**Folsom Dam Road Access Restriction
Final Environmental Impact Statement**

May, 2005

Recommended:

Regional Environmental Officer

Date _____

Approved:

Regional Director

Date _____

I. Introduction

This document is the Record of Decision of the Department of The Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Mid-Pacific Region, for the Folsom Dam Road Access Restriction. The project is the subject of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) dated December 2004 and a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) dated April 2005, developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

II. Decision

Reclamation's decision is to proceed with the Preferred Alternative, Restricted Access Alternative 2, as identified in the FEIS. Reclamation's Federal Action is to reopen Folsom Dam Road to two-way traffic during the morning and evening peak weekday commute hours until completion of the Folsom Dam Bridge Project at which time the road will be permanently closed to all public traffic except emergency vehicles. Under Alternative 2, the Road would remain closed until the features listed below are agreed to and met. The Folsom Dam Bridge Project is a separate project undertaken by the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

The major features associated with the Restricted Access Alternative 2 reflect the concept proposal submitted during the DEIS comment period by the City of Folsom to meet Reclamation security requirements. In summary:

- Vehicles such as passenger cars, motorcycles, and non-commercial pickups generally would be able to travel across Folsom Dam Road during two daily 3-hour peak periods from Monday through Friday.
- The City of Folsom will be responsible for all costs associated with implementing Alternative 2, including all design, construction, and operation and maintenance costs.

During the periods when the road is open:

- Vehicles may travel in both directions across the road;
- Vehicles using the road will be screened as part of a permitting process;
- Every vehicle using the road will be subject to an onsite physical security inspection; actual inspections may be performed on a random basis;
- With implementation of Alternative 2, Folsom Dam Road will be closed periodically, sometimes for extended periods of time, due to operational necessities and to accommodate construction activities.

The FEIS provides the necessary NEPA documentation to undertake this Federal Action. It is anticipated that the actions necessary to implement the preferred alternative could take up to six months to complete before the road can be opened.

III. Background and Alternatives Considered

On February 28, 2003, following a series of security reviews, Reclamation indefinitely closed Folsom Dam Road, as an emergency measure to preserve and protect the core mission of Folsom Dam and Reservoir and to ensure public safety in the vicinity of the dam and other parts of Sacramento County. Meanwhile, Reclamation began developing a comprehensive, long-term security plan for its facilities. The long-term decision regarding access on Folsom Dam Road, which is the subject of the EIS, would have to meet the stated purpose and need of 1) controlling access to Folsom Dam and 2) minimizing the security risks and maximizing the safety of Folsom and of the entire Sacramento metropolitan area downstream of the dam.

Reclamation is the lead agency for the Federal Action, and is responsible for the preparation of the FEIS pursuant to NEPA. Reclamation identified and analyzed four alternatives in the FEIS including the No Action Alternative, which is required under NEPA. The No Action Alternative would reopen Folsom Dam Road to provide access at pre-February 2003 levels, prior to the indefinite closure of the road. No physical alteration of the road or additional restrictions on traffic flow would be undertaken under this alternative. Traffic would be allowed on the road 7 days per week but closed during the evening hours. The pre-February 2003 restrictions, including vehicle weight restrictions and access restrictions for bicyclists and pedestrians, would remain in place under this alternative. Periodic, temporary, short-term road closures, as occurred before February 2003, would continue to be necessary during high security times and for routine and/or emergency dam maintenance activities and construction activities such as flood control improvements under the No Action Alternative.

In addition to the No Action alternative, Reclamation considered three action alternatives that meet the purpose and need in the FEIS. Each of the action alternatives considered was subject to a set of preliminary operating conditions, set forth to maintain a level of security consistent with the purpose and need. These conditions include:

- Vehicles traveling across the dam must be inspected.
- The alternative must allow for periodic extended closures of Folsom Dam Road so that facility operations, maintenance, and construction work can occur.
- Vehicle limits related to size and type and prohibitions on pedestrian and bicycle access will be maintained.
- Emergency vehicle access will continue across Folsom Dam Road.

- The risk of liability to Reclamation from accidents and other mishaps that may occur with public use of Folsom Dam Road will be mitigated.
- The City of Folsom shall bear all capital, operational, and maintenance costs associated with implementation of any restricted access alternative.
- Selection and implementation of a restricted access alternative requires a designated access traffic lane and traffic controls that allow unimpeded access for official purposes into and out of Reclamation's Folsom Dam Industrial Complex.

Reclamation considered a long-term closure alternative, which would result in the continued and permanent closure of Folsom Dam Road between Folsom-Auburn Road and East Natoma Street. Under this alternative, access to Folsom Dam Road would be closed to all public traffic, except emergency vehicles. Although this alternative was subject to the operational requirements listed above, several of the conditions were not applicable because of the nature of this alternative. This alternative was identified as the Preferred Alternative in the DEIS, and as stated previously, was changed to Alternative 2 for the FES.

Restricted Access Alternative 3 was also examined in the EIS. Under this alternative, vehicle access on Folsom Dam Road would be limited to 2-hour peak weekday commute periods. This alternative was similar in design and effect to the Preferred Alternative – Restricted Access Alternative 2, with three main differences: 1) the capacity or rate of traffic that would be inspected, 2) the operating hours of Folsom Dam Road, and 3) the directional flow of traffic; Restricted Access Alternative 3 would allow for traffic traveling in only one direction. The Preferred Alternative – Restricted Access Alternative 2 would allow bidirectional traffic for two three-hour periods between Monday and Friday. The road would remain closed during non-peak and weekend hours.

IV. Basis of Decision and Issues Evaluated

The purpose and need for the Federal Action takes into consideration Reclamation's statutory mission and authority for the operation, maintenance, and security associated with Folsom Dam facilities. In the FEIS, the four alternatives were evaluated on how well they met the project's purpose and need, and their environmental consequences. Public comment during the scoping process and DEIS comment period weighed into the selection of Restricted Access Alternative 2 as the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS.

Impacts of each of the alternatives to a number of environmental resource areas were evaluated:

- Transportation and traffic
- Air quality

- Noise
- Economic and Social Conditions
- Water Resources and Supply
- Biological Resources
- Energy and Power Supply
- Recreation
- Cultural Resources
- Public Services and Facilities

Based on the analysis contained in the FEIS, Reclamation concluded that the No Action Alternative is the environmentally preferred alternative. No immediate adverse impacts would result from restoring public access to pre-February 2003 levels. However, the risk of dam failure would also be greatest under this alternative. Therefore, while the No Action Alternative is identified as the environmentally preferable alternative, it also conflicts with Reclamation's statutory mission and responsibilities and the agency's ability to provide the greatest measure of public safety; it does not meet the purpose and need of the Federal Action. Furthermore, the greater risks associated with potential dam failure with this alternative have associated higher risk of detrimental downstream environmental consequences that cannot be mitigated.

The long-term closure alternative was identified as the Preferred Alternative in the DEIS because it met the purpose and need to the greatest extent of the alternatives considered. During the public comment period, however, commenters expressed concern over traffic- and circulation-related impacts. Reclamation closely reviewed Restricted Access Alternative 2 and determined that, with implementation of appropriate security measures, risks to public safety could be minimized. Public support for Restricted Access Alternative 2, along with commitments from the City of Folsom to bear capital, operational, and maintenance costs associated with that alternative, helped render Restricted Access Alternative 2, the preferred alternative in the FEIS. The Preferred Alternative – Restricted Access Alternative 2 meets Reclamation's purpose and need for the Federal Action.

The environmental impacts associated with Restricted Access Alternative 3 were similar to those of the Preferred Alternative - Restricted Access Alternative 2. Nevertheless because this alternative limited public access to two 2-hour periods between Monday and Friday and because traffic would only be allowed in one direction while the road is open made this alternative less desirable.

V. Environmental Commitments

The FEIS identified all Practicable means to avoid or minimize adverse effects on the environment associated with the implementation of the Preferred Alternative – Restricted Access Alternative 2. However, mitigation measures identified were either outside Reclamation’s authority or not feasible. The selection of the Preferred Alternative – Restricted Access Alternative 2 will reduce some of the traffic-related impacts associated with the February 2003 road closure.

With implementation of the Preferred Alternative, impacts could occur related to installation of certain security measures that may not have been covered. As security plans are finalized, additional environmental review will take place as needed prior to implementation and construction, including Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Mitigation measures considered in the Final EIS for the Preferred Alternative include the following:

Transportation

Selection of the Preferred Alternative – Restricted Alternative 2, provides the most access across Folsom Dam Road of the alternatives studied in the Final EIS, with the exception of the No Action alternative, and provides the greatest off-set or mitigation to existing and future traffic conditions. Relatively major changes in roadway and intersection capacity would be required to substantially further improve existing and future congestion. Most roadway segments cannot be widened or intersection operations improved without right-of-way acquisition or disruption to existing properties and businesses. These include improvements evaluated on East Natoma Street, Folsom-Auburn Road, and Riley Street. At other locations, potential improvements to local roads and intersections provided no or marginal improvement to traffic operating conditions. Local measures to increase preference for transit, carpool, and non-vehicular travel were also identified but would require local implementation. Improvements to local streets, roads, and alternative transportation modes were determined outside of the authority of Reclamation.

Noise

Traffic changes with the Preferred Alternative result in only minor increases in noise levels, at the highest location of about 1 dBA in the 2005 study year, and up to about 2.5 dBA in 2013. The predicted changes in levels are at or below the threshold of a perceptible or audible change. Noise barriers were evaluated at the impacted location and determined impracticable because they would require openings for driveways (reducing their effectiveness) and would impede access to the properties. The noise levels are not considered extreme under federal criteria, and therefore extraordinary measures to insulate homes or structures were not recommended. Alternative roadway surfaces to reduce traffic-generated noise, such as “open-graded” pavement, were considered and might provide short-term benefits but have high cost and maintenance. Noise mitigation

was considered of marginal effectiveness and high cost with respect to the potential level of impact, and would be outside of the authority of Reclamation.

Economic and Social Conditions

Of the alternatives considered, the Preferred Alternative – Restricted Access Alternative 2 provides the most access and circulation to and within the City of Folsom and its business community, with the exception of the No Action alternative. No mitigation was identified for any remaining specific impacts. Any claims that direct losses or impact in revenue are specifically associated with the road closure would have to be disassociated from any other cumulative effects or changes in economic conditions.

Other Resource Areas

No other impacts or associated mitigation measures were identified for the project, except for potential impacts and mitigation that may be necessary related to the installation of security facilities. When these security measures are finalized, appropriate mitigation will be considered. When specific facilities have been identified, they will be considered against the affected environment and impacts already identified and evaluated for the project, and if necessary additional studies, evaluations and compliance will be completed.

VI. Comments Received on the Final EIS

Following the filing of the FEIS in April of 2005, one comment letter was received, from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA noted continued concerns with respect to three air quality impact issues, which are summarized below. Reclamation believes that all of these issues were addressed in the FEIS and in related documents. Clarifications for each of EPA's concerns are presented below.

1. EPA Comment: EPA noted that the additional information included on sensitive receptors in Appendix E1 of the Final EIS, along with a description of potential impacts to these receptors, should have been included in the main text of the Final EIS.

Response to EPA Comment: Reclamation's discussion of sensitive receptors in comment USEPA-2, Appendix E1, was part of the Final EIS, which was available to the public. In the response, Reclamation has provided a list of sensitive receptors in the project vicinity. Table 3.2-5 in the Final EIS lists the total change in pollutant emissions between the No Action Alternative and the action alternatives on a regional basis. This data shows that the change in each of the criteria pollutants, with the exception of CO, would be less than one pound per day, and this is discussed in the FEIS. Section 3.2.2.2 provides a discussion of this table, and notes that the changes in emissions are negligible.

Reclamation modeled CO changes, which showed that even at worst-case levels (i.e., those receptors nearest some of the most congested intersections), the change in concentrations would be approximately 1 ppm or less and would not exceed an air quality

standard for CO. For pollutants other than CO, the change in concentration levels would be even lower. The response to comment USEPA-2 provided additional explanation on the types of sensitive receptors in the regional area, but the conclusion that both changes in vehicle emissions as well as the associated changes in air quality concentrations are negligible and do not result in exceedance of any air quality standards is consistent with the DEIS.

2. EPA Comment: EPA commented that the discussion of California Air Resources Board guidelines is helpful in understanding the context of health impacts of toxic air emissions, but that there may still be mobile air toxics impacts along affected roadways. Reclamation should qualitatively discuss the potential for impacts, including potential health impacts, from mobile air toxins along roadways affected by the closure, and work with the City of Folsom and others to reduce these potential impacts.

Response to EPA Comment: Toxic air contaminants are pollutants for which specific air quality standards have not been established, but that are capable of causing short-term (acute) and/or long-term (chronic or carcinogenic) adverse human health effects. As noted in USEPA-2 in Appendix E1 of the Final EIS, the impact from the changes in levels of potential toxic emissions from the alternatives studied would be relative to the change in congestion and vehicle miles traveled, which is discussed in Section 3.2 of the EIS. Potential impacts of toxic air contaminants may include respiratory problems, irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat, and in some cases, reproductive dysfunctions. Exposure to these risks is occurring with existing traffic and congestion.

The Final EIS analysis states (in response to comment USEPA-2), the changes in air toxics even along the most affected roadways would be low, if not negligible, depending on location and exposure. Exposure to vehicle emissions is reduced through fewer vehicle miles traveled, either by fewer cars on the road or shorter trips, and reduction in congestion. With the possible exception of the No Action Alternative, the selection of the Preferred Alternative – Restricted Access Alternative 2 minimizes the exposure of potential adverse impacts associated with air toxics. Reclamation is working with the City of Folsom to implement this alternative.

EPA Comment: EPA commented that the study area as a whole is not considered to be minority or low-income, but there could be a possibility that disproportionate impacts could still affect areas that have relatively higher minority or low-income populations. Reclamation should provide additional analysis to identify or confirm the absence of any potential disproportionate impacts to low income or minority populations in the project vicinity.

Response to EPA Comment: In response to EPA's concerns regarding potential environmental justice issues in the project vicinity, Reclamation provided data to demonstrate that the areas that make up the study area are not characterized as low-income or areas that have large minority populations. This data was provided in USEPA-3 in Appendix E1 of the Final EIS. Reclamation has considered EPA's concern and reviewed block-level census data within one mile of the intersections that have been most

affected by the alternatives, as noted in Section 3.1. These data are reflective of the broader study area evaluated in the EIS. For example, within one mile of the Folsom Boulevard and Natoma Street intersection, approximately 85 percent of the population is white. Less than 8 percent of the population has an income of less than \$10,000; of all income groups, the largest number has average earnings of \$35,000 - \$75,000. This localized data is consistent with the larger study area documented in the FEIS, indicating that no disproportionate minority or low-income populations are adversely affected by the alternatives.