



TRINITY COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
#1 Horseshoe Lane, P.O Box 1450 Weaverville, CA 96093
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***Notice of Preparation
For An Environmental Impact Report***

Lewiston-Dark Gulch Rehabilitation Project: Trinity River Mile 105.4 to 111.7

TO: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Parties

FROM: Trinity County Resource Conservation District

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation for an integrated Draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Assessment (Draft EIR/EA) for the Bureau of Reclamation, Trinity River Restoration Program: Lewiston-Dark Gulch Rehabilitation Project: Trinity River Mile 105.4 to 111.7. The Draft EIR/EA will meet both California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

CEQA LEAD AGENCY: Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD)

NEPA LEAD AGENCY: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP)

NEPA COOPERATING AGENCIES: U.S.D.A., Forest Service; U.S.D.I, Bureau of Land Management,

PROJECT TITLE: Lewiston-Dark Gulch Rehabilitation Project: Trinity River Mile 105.4 to 111.7

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING: A public scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 15, 2007 at 6:30 pm at the Lewiston Community Center, 302 Texas Ave, Lewiston, CA. Information on the Lewiston-Dark Gulch Rehabilitation Project: Trinity River Mile 105.4 to 111.7 (Project) will be presented and comments on the scope of the Draft EIR/EA will be accepted. Announcement of the meeting will be made in Weaverville's local newspaper, the Trinity Journal, by letter to adjacent landowners and interested parties, and posted on the TCRCD website at <http://www.tcrd.net> and on the TRRP website at <http://www.trrp.net>.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION COMMENT PERIOD: This Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Project initiates the CEQA/NEPA scoping process and establishes the public review period. This thirty day (30) period extends from May 1 to May 31, 2007. The purpose of this review period is to provide involved agencies and the public with an opportunity to learn about the

project and to solicit comments to assist the Lead Agencies in identifying the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, and environmental effects to be analyzed in the Draft EIR/EA. The TCRCD, as CEQA Lead Agency, and other agencies will use this Draft EIR/EA when considering discretionary authorizations, permits, and/or other approvals for the Project.

Public and agency comments must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 31, 2007.

PLEASE ADDRESS COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, AND RESPONSES TO:

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Attn: Mark Dowdle

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Approximately 3 months after close of the public review period for the scoping process, the Lead Agencies will issue the Draft EIR/EA and will provide potential responsible and trustee agencies, interested parties and members of the public an opportunity to review and provide comments on the document.

PROJECT PROPONENT:

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Northern California Area Office

Trinity River Restoration Program

P.O. Box 1300

1313 Main Street

Weaverville, CA 96093

BACKGROUND: The Central Valley Project Improvement Act (1992) and the 1955 Trinity River Act provide the legal authority for projects that restore the fishery resources of the Trinity River. Specifically, these acts include language intended to require the federal government to preserve, propagate, protect, restore, and enhance fish, wildlife, and associated habitats within the Trinity River Basin.

In December 2000, the Secretary of Interior signed a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Trinity River Fishery Restoration Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). This decision recognized that restoration and maintenance of the Trinity River's fishery resources requires rehabilitating the river itself, and restoring the attributes that produce a healthy, functioning alluvial river system. Consequently, the ROD included five components to ensure long-term restoration and maintenance of the Trinity River: a) Variable annual instream flows ranging from 369,000 acre-feet (af) in critically dry years to 815,000 af in extremely wet years; b) Physical channel rehabilitation, including the removal of riparian berms and the establishment of side channel habitat; c) Sediment management, including the supplementation of spawning gravels below Lewiston Dam and reduction in fine sediments which degrade fish habitats; d) Watershed restoration efforts, addressing negative impacts which have resulted from land use

practices in the Trinity River Basin; and e) Infrastructure improvements or modifications, including rebuilding or fortifying bridges and addressing other structures affected by peak instream flows as provided by the ROD. Reclamation opened the TRRP office in Weaverville, California was opened in September 2002 for the purpose of implementing the ROD.

The ROD's channel rehabilitation component focuses attention on the need to physically manipulate the bank and floodplain features of the Trinity River between River Mile 112.0 (Lewiston Dam) and River Mile 72.4 (North Fork Trinity River). The channel rehabilitation is intended to restore the Trinity River's historic alternate point bar morphology and habitat complexity to improve fishery resources. The Project is the fourth channel rehabilitation project already built or in the planning stages that will work together to enhance river processes and to increase fisheries habitat downstream of Lewiston Dam. The fundamental objective of the Project is to increase juvenile salmonid rearing habitat on the mainstem Trinity River. Habitat quality and complexity will be enhanced via construction of slow water refuge habitats, placement of structures (e.g., large woody debris), and introduction of gravel into the river's floodplain.

The TCRCD, was recipient of a grant from the California Department of Fish and Game Fisheries Restoration Grant Program, and will provide substantial funding for the Project, thereby establishing its role as the state CEQA Lead Agency. As the CEQA lead agency, the TCRCD will prepare a Draft EIR for the Project as described below. The TCRCD requests your views concerning the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your interests or agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project. Pursuant to CEQA/NEPA, the Draft EIR/AE will provide the documentation necessary to authorize the Project and support other discretionary actions by the lead, cooperating, and responsible agencies. The Draft EIR/EA will also serve as the disclosure document to interested parties and the general public.

Project description, location maps, and a summary of the potential environmental effects are included in this NOP.

PROJECT LOCATION: The Project will include activities within two discrete reaches of the mainstem Trinity River between the Lewiston Hatchery and Bucktail Bridge in the general vicinity of Lewiston, Trinity County, California. The Lewiston reach encompasses approximately 2 miles of the Trinity River (River Mile 109.7 to 111.7). The Dark Gulch reach encompasses 1.7 miles of the Trinity River (River Mile 105.4 to 107.1). The Lewiston reach is located between the geographic locales of Township 33 North, Range 8 West, Section 8, 17 18 and 19 and Township 32 North, Range 10 West, Section 1 Mt. Diablo Meridian Baseline (040° 42' 55" North latitude by 122° 48' 18" West longitude). The Dark Gulch reach is located within Township 33 North, Range 9 West, Sections 13, 23, and 24, MDBM, (040° 42' 22" North latitude by 122° 50' 22" West longitude). These reaches are depicted on **Figure 1**. Collectively the Project boundary encompasses these two reaches. (including the Dark Gulch site and the Lewiston Group of sites). The Project boundaries are shown on the Project Location Map, **Figure 2**.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Within the Project boundary, discrete activity areas have been identified. Within these activity areas, a variety of specific actions may be conducted that are intended to enhance or reestablish the Trinity River’s alternate point bar morphology and channel complexity, and to subsequently provide an increase in useable fish habitat. In addition, these actions are intended to enhance the riparian and terrestrial habitat adjacent to the Trinity River. The following actions may be conducted in one or more activity areas as part of this project:

- Removal of Vegetation, including mature riparian vegetation
- Earthwork in the Trinity River floodplain and within the active river channel
- Material transportation and stockpiling
- Revegetation
- Processing and placement of gravel into the river
- Spoiling of excavated materials and by-products of gravel processing.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The Draft EIR/EA is being prepared to evaluate potential impacts to the environment and their levels of significance, if any. The following section provides a brief discussion of the environmental factors and anticipated impacts that will be addressed in the Draft EIR/EA.

Air Quality. The Draft EIR/EA will address regional air quality conditions in Trinity County and the air quality impacts resulting from the actions incorporated into this project. Air quality will be examined to determine if the Project would result in a conflict with the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District regional air quality plan. The nearby Weaverville Basin is in moderate “non-attainment” of state PM10 standards. Vehicle exhaust and fugitive dust from construction activities on and adjacent to the site, as well as transport of excess material offsite will be considered. There will be no anticipated operational air quality impacts after construction has been completed and all materials have been spoiled.

Noise. Potential noise impacts associated with project construction, as well as transportation, processing, and placement of gravel, will be assessed in the Draft EIR/EA. Noise levels will be evaluated for consistency with the Lewiston Community Plan, the Trinity County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, and state and federal standards and guidelines regulating noise on public and private lands.

Geology and Soils. Geological and seismic safety and soils stability will be addressed in the Draft EIR/EA. The Project may open access to marketable mineral resources (e.g., sand and gravel) that are not presently available. Mineral resources will also be addressed, particularly as they relate to activities authorized under the federal 1872 Mining Law, Section 30.1 of the Trinity County Zoning Ordinance (Mining) and the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA).

Hydrology, Water Quality, and Floodplains. The Draft EIR/EA will address any hydrology, water quality, and floodplain impacts that may occur as a result of the Project.

The construction phase of the Project may have the potential to increase erosion, turbidity, and sedimentation levels downstream of the Project sites. Work within the floodplain will be subject to streambed alteration agreement conditions issued by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). Activities within the active channel of the Trinity River will be subject to water quality limitations imposed by the California North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board in conjunction with the issuance of a 401 Certification pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act (CWA).

The Trinity River has been listed under Section 303(d) of the CWA as a waterbody impaired by sediment. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Trinity River was completed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December 2001. It is anticipated that the completed project will improve the beneficial uses of the Trinity River (cold water fisheries) that are impaired by sediment.

Per federal Executive Order 11988 (pertaining to floodplain involvement), public notice is hereby given that the Project includes construction within the 100-year floodplain. Portions of the Project are within Zone AE on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), on public and private lands. Areas within Zone AE have specific elevations designated for the Base Flood Elevation (BFE), which is the 100-year floodwater elevation. It is anticipated that completion of the Project will reduce flooding risks and will not adversely affect the 100-year floodplain delineation. Project activities in designated floodplains on private lands will require issuance of a Floodplain Development Permit from Trinity County pursuant to Section 29.4 of the Trinity County Zoning Ordinance.

Biological Resources. Existing biological conditions within the Trinity River and the area surrounding the Project sites will be described, and potential impacts of the on vegetation and wildlife will be assessed. The Draft EIR/EA will evaluate the likelihood for any construction-related significant biological impacts, including effects on endangered, threatened, rare, or other special status plant and animal species, and wetland/special aquatic resources. Long-term environmental impacts on biological resources are anticipated to be beneficial.

Habitat within the Project sites has the potential to support a variety of special-status species (listed and non-listed). Spring and fall chinook salmon, coho salmon, Pacific Lamprey and summer and winter steelhead are known to spawn within the Trinity River and its tributaries. Habitat for various life stages is available for the species within the boundary established for this Draft EIR/EA. In addition, the Trinity River is designated as critical habitat for coho salmon by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). A comprehensive plant and wildlife inventory to determine species presence/absence and potential project-related effects to species that may be present will be completed. Other special-status and listed species could occur within or adjacent to the Project boundary including the willow flycatcher, silky cryptantha, northwestern pond turtle, yellow warbler, yellow-breasted chat, bald eagle, and osprey.

Because there are no known listed riparian and terrestrial species under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within the Project boundary, a Biological Assessment is not expected to be required based on the scope of the Project pursuant to Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). A Biological Opinion (BO) was issued by NOAA Fisheries on

October 12, 2000 for the Trinity River Fisheries Restoration Program. This BO is considered adequate to address listed fish species that may be affected by this project.

The Project will be assessed for consistency with the state and federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts, as well as the California Fish and Game Code (Sections 1600 and 2080). Completion of the Project is expected to enhance anadromous salmon and steelhead fisheries; both identified as outstandingly remarkable values of the Trinity River.

The Project includes a variety of riparian and wetland habitat elements. These elements are considered sensitive, and ecologically important to a variety of human and natural resources. Activities associated with the Project could result in short-term losses to riparian habitat, but those losses should be compensated for with long-term revegetation and increases in habitat quality.

Per federal Executive Orders 11990 (pertaining to wetlands), public notice is hereby given that the Project may encroach upon wetlands. Construction activities associated with the Project could result in temporary and/or permanent impacts to wetland features within the site boundary that are subject to U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's (Corps) jurisdiction, pursuant to Section 404 of the CWA. Within this boundary, a delineation of jurisdictional waters of the United States has been conducted and verified by the Corps.

Cultural Resources. A cultural resources survey and evaluation will be conducted, in compliance with the Programmatic Agreement (PA) for cultural resources compliance regarding implementation of the Trinity River mainstem fishery restoration among federal and tribal agencies with the California State Historic Preservation officer (SHPO). The Draft EIR/AE will also incorporate the requirement to consult with non-federally recognized tribes as required by SHPO, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This evaluation will identify the Area of Potential Effect (APE) and result in an assessment of the APE to determine the presence and significance of cultural and archaeological resources identified. If cultural resources are encountered during the survey, a determination will be made in compliance with the PA and CEQA Guidelines section 15064.5.

Hazards. The actions associated with the Project are not expected to involve the use of hazardous materials and, therefore, will not expose the public to significant hazard. Historic Mercury deposits from past mining efforts may exist on site. However, ongoing U.S. Geological Survey studies suggest that environmental conditions are such that Mercury levels will remain below the level of concern established by EPA

Land Use. The Project is consistent with Trinity County's General Plan and related policies. Potential material extraction and disposal activities (e.g., gravels to be processed and placed in the river) are likely to be incorporated into the project design in compliance with SMARA guidelines. Growth-inducing impacts are not expected to occur as a result of the Project, but will be examined.

Socioeconomic/Displacements/Environmental Justice. Right-of-way acquisition, residential/business displacements, relocation assistance, business impacts, and neighborhood

cohesion will be analyzed pursuant to both CEQA and NEPA. In addition, environmental justice concerns will be addressed pursuant to NEPA. No significant impacts in this context are expected.

Public Services/Utilities. An analysis of public services and utilities associated with the Project will be included in the Draft EIR/EA. No significant impacts in this context are expected.

Visual Resources. A Visual Impact Analysis will be included in the Draft EIR/EA describing the existing visual characteristics within and adjacent to of the Project boundary and analyzing any potential visual impacts. No long-term significant visual effects are anticipated.

Transportation and Circulation. Transportation and circulation impacts associated with the Project will be analyzed, including access during construction, and any impacts to public roads, including Trinity Dam Blvd, and Trinity Hatchery Road, Lewiston Road,, Goose Ranch Road and Browns Mountain Road. Private roads, including Salt Flat Road, will also be addressed in the Draft EIR/EA. A principal objective of the Project is to ensure implementation in a manner that provides safe transit in and adjacent to the Project area. Activities within existing Right-of-Ways for public roads may require issuance of an encroachment permit from the responsible public agency.

Construction Impacts. The Draft EIR/EA will identify and analyze any further short-term construction impacts associated with air quality, noise, water quality, traffic congestion and detours, safety, visual, business access, community facilities, etc.