Bureau of Reclamation

Mid-Pacific Region
Sacramento, California

Finding Of No Significant Impact

Goose Lake Land Acquisition

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Project Conservation Program

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Chief, Division of Environmental
Affairs

FONSI No. 07-12-MP

Background

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to provide $265,000 to the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners (TBWP) to appraise, negotiate and purchase a parcel of land in the Goose Lake Bottom area. Goose Lake is located between Wasco and Lost Hills in northwestern Kern County.

The purpose of the action is to protect habitat for federally listed species in the Goose Lake Bottom area in Kern County. With native vegetation cover in excess of 95%, the alkali grassland/alkali sink scrub in the project area are the best remaining examples of these habitat types in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The area is of great interest because of both its wetland and upland attributes. Throughout the area, native species are dominant and in some places no non-native species are visible. 21 special-status species occur in the Goose Lake area, including four federally-listed species: blunt-nosed leopard lizard, Buena Vista Lake shrew, Tipton kangaroo rat, and San Joaquin kit fox.

Findings

Reclamation prepared an environmental assessment on the grant in December 2007 which is incorporated by reference. The Division of Environmental Affairs of the Mid-Pacific Region of Reclamation has found that the proposed action is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required for carrying out the proposed action.

Following are the reasons why the impacts of the proposed action are not significant:

1. Acquisition of the parcel will not change land use.

2. The current landowner will receive fair market value for the property.

3. Acquisition would permanently protect the parcel and thus provide a long-term, perpetual benefit to the target species and habitat. On June 21, 2007, Reclamation initiated informal consultation with the Service on the activities for projects in the CVPCP and the Habitat Restoration Program for Fiscal Year 2007. The Service concurred on August 21, 2007 that the projects, including riparian restoration for endangered species on the SJRNWR, are not likely to adversely affect listed species.

4. The proposed action has no potential to affect historic properties.

5. The proposed action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets.

6. Implementing the proposed action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities.

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Environmental Assessment

Goose Lake Land Acquisition

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region

December 2007

Background

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to provide $265,000 to the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners (TBWP) to appraise, negotiate and purchase a parcel of land in the Goose Lake Bottom area. Goose Lake is located between Wasco and Lost Hills in northwestern Kern County. The TBWP has proposed the acquisition of lands in the Goose Lake area in T27S, R23E including Sections 18 (a small portion), 19 (all), 20 (a portion), 29 (all), 30 (all), 31 (northern half), 32 (most), and 33 (western half). (See figure.)

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the action is to protect habitat for federally listed species in the Goose Lake Bottom area in Kern County.

This project area is being examined by the landowners to determine how they can make the area economically self-sustaining. All options are being considered including conversion to agriculture. The natural communities at this site have extremely high habitat value. Finding a way to maintain it in undeveloped open space is critical to the survival of populations of many rare and threatened species. The number of acres of existing habitat for the species is extremely low, and the occupied habitat has become highly fragmented. As a result, lands that were formerly occupied have lost their populations within the last ten years; this has happened at the Kern National Wildlife Refuge and at Allensworth Ecological Reserve. Further loss of this habitat would exacerbate the fragmentation of special status species populations.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

No Action: Reclamation would not contribute CVPCP funds to acquire the Goose Lake property. The TBWP would be required to obtain the $265,000 from other private and public sources. If alternative funding cannot be secured, the parcel would not be acquired for conservation purposes and would be subject to possible sale in whole or in part to be used for uses not compatible with wildlife conservation.

Proposed Action: Reclamation would provide $265,000 from the CVPCP to the TBWP to complete property appraisal, carrying out land-owner negotiations, and purchase in the fee title or conservation easement purchase of one or more of the parcels identified in the proposal entitled: *Acquisition of Goose Lake Endangered and Sensitive Species Habitat 2007 Grant Application for CVPCP and HRP, November 30, 2006.*

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

Biological Resources

Affected Environment

With native vegetation cover in excess of 95%, the alkali grassland/alkali sink scrub in the project area are the best remaining examples of these habitat types in the southern San Joaquin

Valley. The area is of great interest because of both its wetland and upland attributes. Throughout the area, native species are dominant and in some places no non-native species are visible. The habitat grades from alkali ponds and flats surrounded by moist alkali grasslands and flats. The alkali grasslands are dominated by Saltgrass, Alkali Sacaton, Creeping Wild Rye, and Alkali Heath. With a gain in elevation, the habitat changes to more xeric conditions featuring Iodine Bush and several species of Atriplex.

Twenty-one special status species have been documented from the Semitropic USGS Quad of which this area forms a portion. All of these 21 species have been found on or near the Project area. These species are: Southwestern Pond Turtle (*Emys marmorata pallida*), Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard (*Gambelia sila*), Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), Greater Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*), Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*), Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*), Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), Le Conte's Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), Buena Vista Lake Shrew (*Sorex ornatus relictus*), San Joaquin Antelope Squirrel (*Ammospermophilus nelsoni*), Tipton Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys nitratoides nitratoides*), San Joaquin Pocket Mouse (*Perognathus inornatus inornatus*), San Joaquin Kit Fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*), Earlimart Orache (*Atriplex erecticaulis*), Lost Hills Crownscale (*Atriplex vallicola*), Slough Thistle (*Cirsium crassicaule*), Recurved Larkspur (*Delphinium recurvatum*), Kern Mallow (*Eremalche kernensis*), Alkali Goldfields (*Lasthenia ferrisiae*), Munz's Tidy-tips (*Layia munzii*), and San Joaquin Woollythreads (*Monolopia congdonii*).

Environmental Consequences

Purchase of the parcel at Goose Lake would protect the habitat in perpetuity from development. It would protect some or all of the 21 special-status species found in the Goose Lake area, including four federally-listed species – blunt-nosed leopard lizard, Buena Vista Lake shrew, Tipton kangaroo rat, and San Joaquin kit fox.

Implementing the proposed action would contribute to attaining the goals of the CVPCP to protect, restore, and enhance threatened and endangered species affected by land conversion during Central Valley Project implementation. Protecting large tracts of native habitat like that found within the Goose Lake area is critical to species recovery and pursuant to the recovery plan for Upland Species in the San Joaquin Valley.

Cultural Resources

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 is the primary Federal legislation which outlines the Federal Government's responsibility to cultural resources. Section 106 of the NHPA requires the Federal Government to take into consideration the effects of an undertaking listed on cultural resources on or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The Section 106 process is outlined in the Federal regulations at 36 CFR Part 800. These regulations describe the process that the Federal agency (Reclamation) takes to identify cultural resources and the level of effect that the proposed undertaking will have on historic properties. Both the no action and the proposed action alternative constitute no potential to affect historic properties pursuant to the regulations at 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1). The proposed action will not result in

modification to existing facilities or construction of new facilities nor bring lands into new agricultural production. There will be no significant impact to cultural resources as a result of implementing the proposed action alternative.

Indian Trust Assets

Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) are legal interests in property or rights held in trust by the United States for Indian Tribes or individual Indians. Indian reservations, Rancherias, and Public Domain Allotments are common ITAs in California. There are no ITAs affected by the proposed action. The nearest ITA to the site is approximately 47 miles NNW and it is the Santa Rosa Rancheria.

Environmental Justice

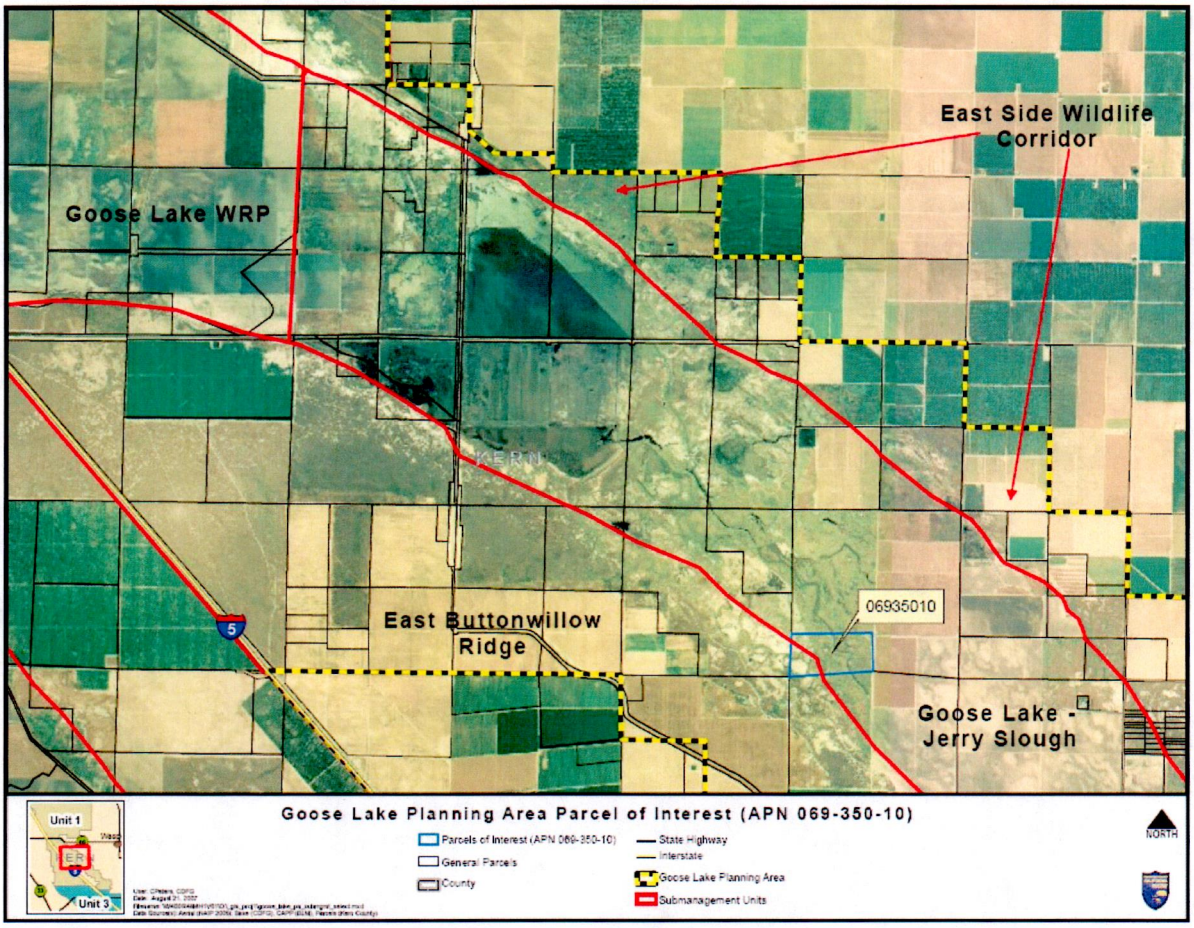
Executive Order 12898 requires each Federal Agency to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects of its program, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. Since there would be no change in existing or similar land uses, there would be no adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations.

Consultation and Coordination with Others

During development of the proposed action, Reclamation and the Service met with the TBWP and conducted a site visit of properties proposed for acquisition.

The CVPCP Technical Team reviewed and ranked the acquisition proposal during the CVPCP proposal review period, between December 15, 2006 and April 1, 2007. The proposal was selected for funding following this evaluation of the project.

On June 21, 2007, Reclamation initiated informal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on the activities for projects in the CVPCP and the Habitat Restoration Program for Fiscal Year 2007. The Service concurred on August 21, 2007 that the projects, including this proposed action, are not likely to adversely affect listed species.


East Side Wildlife Corridor
Goose Lake WRP
East Buttonwillow Ridge
06935010
Goose Lake - Jerry Slough
5
Goose Lake Planning Area Parcel of Interest (APN 069-350-10)
Parcels of Interest (APN 069-350-10)
General Parcels
County
State Highway
Interstate
Goose Lake Planning Area
Submanagement Units
NORTH
Unit 1
Unit 3