

## **APPENDIX A**

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Revised Finding of No Significant Impact / U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

# Finding of No Significant Impact

United Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Mid-Pacific Region

Central California Area Office  
Folsom, California

Placer County  
North Fork American River Trail Project

FONSI # 2008-2

Recommended: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Michael A. Finnegan  
Area Manager,  
Central California Area Office  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**  
Central California Area Office,  
Folsom, California

**Approval by United States for  
Placer County  
North Fork American River Trail Project  
Revised Finding of No Significant Impact**

**Lead Agency:**

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Central California Area Office  
Folsom, California

This Revised Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the North Fork American River Trail Project has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). The Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has found that the Proposed Action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required.

The Placer County Department of Facility Services (Placer County) is proposing the North Fork American River Trail Project (proposed project), which consists of a 14.2-mile multiple-use natural surface trail and two staging termini. The trail would be located on land owned by the Bureau of Reclamation in the Auburn State Recreation Area (Auburn SRA), which is managed by California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks).

The proposed trail alignment is located on the southern slope of the North Fork of the American River canyon in Placer County, approximately 40 miles northeast of Sacramento, California. The beginning of the trail is located at the confluence of the North and Middle Forks of the American River, approximately 3 miles northeast of the City of Auburn near Foresthill Road. The trail ends at Ponderosa Bridge, approximately 5 miles west of the town of Foresthill.

### **Project History**

In 2003–2004, Placer County initiated the environmental review process for the proposed trail project. A public scoping meeting was held on February 19, 2004, to present the project to the public and to receive public comments. Because the project has been proposed on federally owned land, Placer County and Reclamation prepared a joint environmental document in 2004 to assess potential impacts of the project. An initial

study/mitigated negative declaration (IS/MND) was prepared to satisfy the requirements of CEQA, and an Environmental Assessment (EA) to satisfy the requirements of NEPA (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508) and associated federal guidelines.

The analysis conducted by Placer County and Reclamation resulted in the conclusion that no aspect of the proposed trail project, either individually or cumulatively, would result in a significant effect on the environment with inclusion of mitigation measures that were agreed to by the applicant (Placer County) and incorporated as part of the project to avoid or reduce potential adverse environmental effects of the project to less-than-significant levels. Therefore, Placer County prepared an MND for the project.

Placer County and Reclamation prepared responses to comments and issued the Final IS/EA on June 17, 2004 (Placer County and Reclamation 2004). Placer County approved the MND and filed a Notice of Determination pursuant to CEQA on August 24, 2004 (State Clearinghouse No. 2004052021), and Reclamation adopted a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) pursuant to NEPA on August 2, 2004.

However, in order to further evaluate a number of issues raised by the public following adoption of the MND, Placer County decided on May 10, 2005, to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the project pursuant to CEQA and to vacate its earlier approval of the MND. Placer County's decision did not affect the FONSI for the proposed project adopted by Reclamation. Placer County held a public scoping meeting for the EIR on August 31, 2005, to present the project and solicit comments and initiate the environmental review process for the EIR. Placer County released a CEQA Notice of Preparation (NOP) on November 10, 2005. The DEIR addresses issues raised by the public and provides a more comprehensive environmental review of topics that the County has determined should be subject to additional analysis beyond the information presented in the IS/EA.

The Public DEIR was circulated for a 45-day public comment period in August 2007. A public meeting to receive input on the DEIR was held at the Placer County Planning Commission hearing room on August 23, 2007. Responses to comments received during the public comment period and during the public meeting are provided in the March 2008 Final EIR (FEIR).

### **Changes to the Project since the 2004 FONSI**

Several changes have been made to the proposed project since the adoption of the August 2004 FONSI for the North Fork American River Trail Project. The changes to the project include:

- widening the trail from 4 feet to 6 feet;
- realigning portions of the trail to avoid landslide areas and private property resulting in the trail length changing from 12.6 miles to 14.2 miles;
- crossing 46 drainages instead of 48 drainages; and

- relocating the Foresthill Bridge Staging Terminus from the abandoned parking lot near Foresthill Bridge to approximately 200 yards east of the Foresthill Bridge.

These changes were made to improve the project, reduce impacts, and/or avoid private property. Based on the additional analysis on the proposed project provided in the DEIR and FEIR and review of the changes made to the project since the issuance of the August 2004 FONSI, Reclamation has prepared this Revised FONSI for the proposed project.

### **Alternatives Considered**

The DEIR included consideration of seven alternatives to the proposed trail alignment.

The following five alternatives were considered but eliminated from analysis in the DEIR. The alternative consisting of a trail on the north side of the river was eliminated because a trail located on the north side of the river would be more visible from the lake and river corridor and there would be no connections to existing trails. To avoid a large slide located downstream from the dam, a trail on the north side of the canyon would have to be routed half way up the slope of the canyon and through private property. In addition to these constraints, known historic structures would have to be avoided in determining the trail alignment.

Another alternative consists of a trail alignment with separated user segments moving from the North Fork to the Middle Fork American River. This alternative does not meet the purpose and objectives of the proposed project to provide a multiple-use trail that reduces overcrowding on existing trails. This alternative relies on extensive use of existing trails, which would cause continued overcrowding, user conflicts, and over use of these trails. This alternative would not discourage informal connections between trails, would not allow for multiple uses along the proposed trail, and would not connect to any termini to facilitate user access. The segments near the river/lake would be within the floodplain of the river and would be extremely difficult to maintain because of regular flooding of this area. These segments of trail would also be more visible from the river/lake and could create potential user conflicts with water-recreation users. Additionally, the riparian areas adjoining the river are considered sensitive habitat types, and the Trail Advisory Group (TAG) recommended against siting a trail near the river.

The 4-foot Trail Alternative was considered to construct a trail that would follow the same alignment as the proposed project and have a 4-foot trail tread width. A narrower tread width would have more of an impact on user safety and recreation because of user conflicts and reduced lines of sight. In addition, this trail width would not meet the project's objectives nor conform to State Parks' standards for multiple-use trails

A fourth alternative was considered to construct a trail that would be approximately 5 feet wide and 14.4 miles long. This alternative would require easements through private property. Impacts of this alternative would be similar to the proposed project. This alignment would also have a slightly narrower width than the proposed trail, which would not meet project objectives nor conform to State Parks' standards for multiple-use trails.

The narrower tread width would have more of an impact on user safety and recreation because of user conflicts and reduced lines of sight.

The Ridgetop Alternative was considered to construct a trail along the ridgetop of the canyon that divides the North Fork and Middle Fork of the American River. However, a similar trail, the Connector Trail, was constructed by Placer County approximately 3 years ago, and connects the Lake Clementine Trail and the Foresthill Divide Loop Trail. Therefore, it would be redundant to construct another trail in this area. This alternative would not reduce any significant effects of the proposed project.

Two alternatives were carried forward in the EIR for more detailed analysis. These alternatives are the “No Project” Alternative and the Original Alignment Alternative.

The No Project alternative would result in the North Fork American River Trail not being constructed. This alternative would not meet the demand for recreational facilities in Placer County, specifically hiking, biking, and equestrian trails along the North Fork of the American River.

The Original Alignment Alternative was considered to construct the 12.6-mile trail that was proposed in the IS/EA for the North Fork American River Trail. This alternative would cross steeper slopes that are more susceptible to high erosion than the proposed project. This alternative would also cross private property. Therefore, the proposed project is preferred over the Original Alignment Alternative, because it would have reduced impacts on geology and soils and water quality and would not cross private property.

## **Findings**

Reclamation has determined that there is no substantial evidence that any aspect of the proposed project, either individually or cumulatively, may cause a significant effect on the human environment. No federally listed, threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat will be affected. The proposed project will have a less-than-significant effect on cultural resources. The proposed project will have no impact to economic or employment opportunities so it is consistent with E.O. 12898 concerning impacts on minority or low income populations. The project will not affect Indian Trust Assets. The project will not affect Wild and Scenic Rivers or outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs). No cumulative impacts are anticipated. This determination is based upon the environmental analysis in the EIR, and in consideration of other pertinent documents and consultation with other agencies.

An EA, distributed for public review in 2004, has been prepared to disclose potential environmental impacts pursuant to NEPA. An EIR, distributed for public review in August 2007, has been prepared to disclose potential environmental impacts pursuant to CEQA. The following discussion identifies why any effects of the Proposed Action are not considered significant.

1. The Proposed Action will have no significant effects to air quality. Construction emissions will be temporary and short-term, and long-term emissions will not exceed thresholds established Placer County Air Quality Pollution Control District.
2. Reclamation has determined that there will be no significant effect on biological resources upon implementation of mitigation. The project area has the potential to provide habitat to foothill yellow-legged frog; however potential impacts to foothill yellow-legged frogs would be mitigated for through avoiding construction across drainages during the wet season, if possible, implementing measures to protect water quality, and minimizing disturbance to drainages if water is present. The project area also provides habitat for some special-status plants and oak woodlands. Mitigation to avoid impacts to these resources will include pre-construction surveys for special-status plants, marking and avoiding those plants identified in the field or avoiding construction during the flowering period, and compensating for any native trees larger than 6 inches diameter at breast height. The County will obtain a Nationwide Permit 42 and a Section 401 Water Quality Certification and comply with the terms in both permits to mitigate for impacts on wetlands. The County would implement measures to avoid the spread of invasive weeds into the project area. Mitigation measures have also been incorporated into the project to insure project construction does not disturb any active nests of migratory birds that may nest in trees within the project area.
3. The proposed action will have no significant effect on cultural or historic resource because the trail will be realigned to avoid potentially significant sensitive resources or resources eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in the project area. The County will also implement measures to halt work and ensure protection of previously undiscovered cultural resources or human interments.
4. The proposed action will have no significant effect on geology and soils because the County will implement all measures outlined in the geotechnical report for the project, turbidity/siltation minimization measures will be used (i.e. silt fencing, coir logs, straw bale dikes, or other siltation barriers), and vegetation removal shall be limited to that required to construct the project.
5. The proposed action will have no significant effect from hazardous materials. The project area is not listed on any hazardous materials lists. The potential exists for hazardous materials to be released during construction; however, an accidental-spill prevention and response plan will be prepared and implemented, employees will be trained on handling hazardous materials, and a staging area for storage of hazardous materials will be identified.
6. The proposed action will have no significant impact on hydrology and water quality because a Section 401 Water Quality Certification will be obtained and the County will comply with the terms of that permit, turbidity/siltation minimization measures will be used (i.e. silt fencing, coir logs, straw bale dikes, or other siltation barriers), and vegetation removal shall be limited to that required to construct the project.

7. The proposed action would have no impact on land use and planning because the proposed action would not conflict with any land use plans, policies, or regulations in the planning area. In addition, the project area is in the Auburn State Recreation area and because the project is a recreation project, it would not conflict any existing or future land uses.

8. The proposed action will not result in significant effects from noise at adjacent sensitive receptors. The project could result in short-term construction related noise increases; however, construction would be limited to daytime hours and would be subject to Placer County noise ordinances, and would therefore not be a significant noise impact from project construction. Long-term use of the project would not cause a significant increase in noise in the project area.

9. The proposed action will have no significant impact on traffic and transportation because the project would not create any traffic or design hazards, would not interfere with an emergency response plan, and would provide adequate parking for trail users. In addition, the project is not expected to significantly increase traffic on area roadways or cause an exceedance in level of service on any roadways.

10. The proposed action would have no effects to environmental justice. No disproportionately high or adverse environmental or human health effects on minority or low-income communities have been identified for the proposed action.

11. The proposed action would have no impact to Indian Trust Assets because none are present within or near the project area.

12. There will be no significant cumulative impacts from the proposed action because the project is consistent with land use and circulation plans identified in the Placer County General Plan; all potentially significant environmental effects would be mitigated for to reduce them to less than significant levels; and any environmental effects from the proposed action, when considered together with the potential effects from other projects or actions in the area, would not significantly contribute to cumulative effects to environmental resources.

## **Conclusions**

Reclamation has fully evaluated the information and analysis contained in the EA and EIR for the North Fork American River Trail Project, as summarized above. On the basis of these considerations, Reclamation has determined that the EA and EIR adequately and accurately addresses the environmental issues and impacts of the proposed action and finds that the proposed action is not a major federal action that will significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is not required and will not be prepared for this project, based on the fact that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the human environment resulting from the North Fork American River Trail Project.