U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

Mid-Pacific Region
Lahontan Basin Area Office
Carson City, Nevada

Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment

Ditch Rider Houses Demolition and Removal
Churchill and Lyon Counties, Nevada

July 2009

FONSI NO. LO-09-05

Prepared by: _____ Date:
Andrea Minor
Natural Resources Specialist

Recommended: _____ Date:
Patrick Mangan
Resource Division Manager

Approved: _____ Date:
Kenneth Parr
Area Manager

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Ditch Rider Houses Demolition and Removal

I. Background, Proposed Action, and Purpose and Need

The Newlands Project provides water from the Truckee and Carson Rivers for irrigation of approximately 57,000 acres in the Lahontan Valley near Fallon and Fernley in western Nevada. The ditch rider houses were built by Reclamation to provide housing for the operators of the irrigation facilities, and are still under Reclamation ownership. Over time, with the automation of the irrigation facilities, the ditch riders were no longer necessary to operate the facilities. The ditch rider houses are now vacant and are no longer maintained.

The purpose of the proposed action is to facilitate the demolition and removal of three ditch rider houses and their associated structures. The fourth will have ownership transferred to the State of Nevada, who may dispose of the structures as they see fit. The ditch rider houses are no longer utilized or needed, and pose a human health and safety hazard.

II. Summary of Impacts

Proposed Action Alternative:
Local wildlife may be displaced by the noise and disturbance during destruction and removal; these effects would be minimal and temporary.

There may be temporary small increases in fugitive dust emissions from demolition and removal activities; these would be short-term.

The demolition and removal of the houses would temporarily impact the vegetation immediately surrounding them over the short-term.

There are no threatened or endangered species in the houses or within their immediate vicinity.

Historic & Cultural Resources: No affect

Indian Trust Assets: No impacts

Environmental Justice: No impacts

No Action Alternative:
There would be no effects and no change from current conditions from the No Action Alternative to any of the resources analyzed in this EA.

Cumulative impacts / Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments:
There will be no effect on environmental resources from cumulative impacts with regards to the demolition and removal of the four former ditch rider houses. There would be no irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources.

III. Comments Received on the EA

No public comments were received during the scoping period on the EA.

IV. Findings

Reclamation prepared an environmental assessment on the impacts of demolishing and removing the ditch rider houses. The EA documents that compliance has occurred with the Endangered Species Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Indian Trust Assets, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Environmental Justice, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Lahontan Basin Area Office 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 this action.

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

1. There would be short-term, temporary impacts during destruction and removal to the following resources: wildlife, air quality, and vegetation.

2. There will be no impact to Threatened or Endangered Species, Indian Trust Assets, or historic or cultural resources.

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

4. There are no irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources.

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Ditch Rider Houses Demolition and Removal

Environmental Assessment

U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Lahontan Basin Area Office
705 N. Plaza, Room 320
Carson City, NV 89701

June 2009

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DITCH RIDER HOUSES DEMOLITION AND REMOVAL

Churchill and Lyon Counties, Nevada

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Lahontan Basin Area Office
Carson City, Nevada

June 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background 1
1.2 Location 1
1.4 Purpose and Need for Action 7
1.5 Public Involvement, Consultation and Coordination 7

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Alternative 1 – Proposed Action 7
2.2 Alternative 2 – No Action 7

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 Site Description/Affected Environment 8
3.2 Environmental Consequences 8
3.2.1 No Action Alternative 8
3.2.2 Proposed Action Alternative 8
3.2.2.1 Wildlife 8
3.2.2.2 Threatened and Endangered Species 8
3.2.2.3 Water Resources 9
3.2.2.4 Air Quality 9
3.2.2.5 Vegetation 9
3.2.2.6 Historic and Cultural Resources 9
3.2.2.7 Indian Trust Assets 10
3.2.2.8 Environmental Justice 10

4.0 OTHER NEPA CONSIDERATIONS 11

4.1 Cumulative Impacts 11
4.2 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments 11

5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS 11

FIGURES
Figure 5.1 - St.Clair house 2
Figure 5.2 – Smart District house 3
Figure 5.3 – Factor District house 4
Figure 5.4 – Fernley District garage 4
Figure 5.5 – Churchill County location map 5
Figure 5.6 – Lyon County location map 6

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Newlands Project provides water from the Truckee and Carson Rivers for irrigation of approximately 57,000 acres in the Lahontan Valley near Fallon and Fernley in western Nevada. The ditch rider houses were built by Reclamation to provide housing for the operators of the irrigation facilities, and are still under Reclamation ownership. Over time, with the automation of the irrigation facilities, the ditch riders were no longer necessary to operate the facilities. The ditch rider houses are now vacant and are no longer maintained.

1.2 Locations of Ditch Rider Houses

The four houses and their associated structures are referred to by district. There is the St. Clair District house (Fig. 1), the Smart District house (Fig. 2), the Factory District house (Fig. 3), and the Fernley District garage (Fig. 4). The St. Clair, Smart, and Factory houses are located in Churchill County (Fig. 5), while the Fernley District garage is located in Lyon County (Fig. 6).

The Factory District house and garage was built in 1960, and has been vacant since October 2006. They are located on Reclamation withdrawn lands that are managed by TCID. The location is T19N, R29E, Sec. 28, SW ¼ NW ¼.

The Fernley District garage (and its associated house, which burned down in early 2007) was built in 1910, and has been vacant and unused since June 2006. It is located on Reclamation acquired lands, also managed by TCID. The location is T20N, R24E, Sec. 09, Lot 14.

The Smart District house and garage were built in 1910, and have been vacant since June 2006. They are currently located on a two-acre Reclamation easement on land owned by the State of Nevada. The location is T18N, R29E, Sec. 06, Lot 04.

The St. Clair District house was built in 1910, and has been vacant since October 2006. It is located on a Reclamation easement on private land. The location is T19N, R28E, Sec. 34, SE ¼ NW ¼.

House	Location	Action
Fernley District garage	Reclamation acquired lands	Allow TCID to demolish and remove
Factory District house	Reclamation withdrawn lands	Allow TCID to demolish and remove
Smart District house	Reclamation easement on State land	Transfer ownership to state
St. Clair District house	Reclamation easement on private land	Allow TCID to demolish and remove

Fig. 1. St. Clair District house.

Fig. 2. Smart District house.

Fig. 3. Factory District house.

Fig. 4. Fernley District garage.

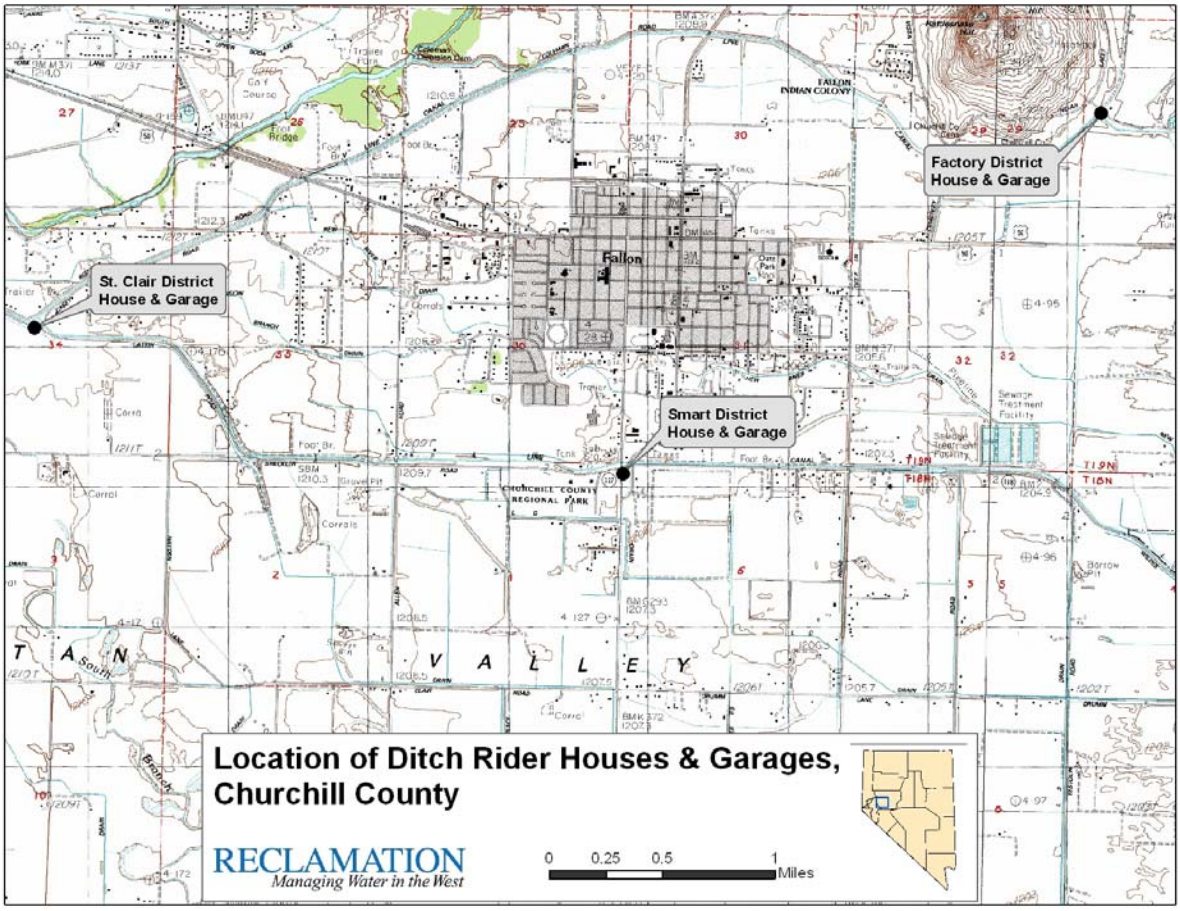

Figure 5. Churchill County location Map.

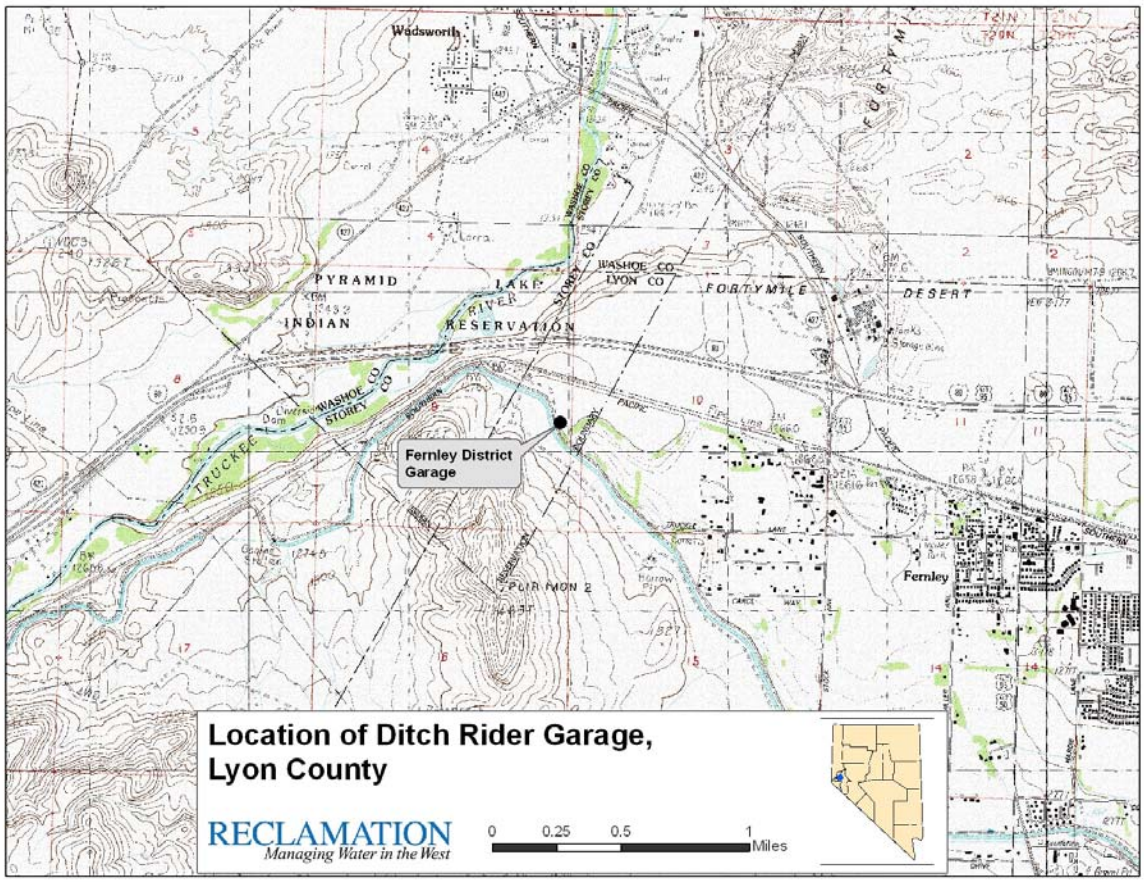

Figure 6. Lyon County location Map.

1.3 Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to facilitate the demolition and removal of three ditch rider houses and their associated structures. The fourth will have ownership transferred to the State of Nevada, who may dispose of the structures as they see fit. The ditch rider houses are no longer utilized or needed, and pose a human health and safety hazard.

1.4 Public Involvement, Consultation and Coordination

An advertisement describing the proposed demolition and removal of the ditch rider houses and requesting scoping comments was published in the Lahontan Valley News and the Fernley Leader on December 5, 2007, and the Fallon Star on December 6, 2007. A press release on the proposed project requesting comments was also released on December 5, 2007, to Reclamation's Regional "Mid-Pacific All the News" list. The list consists of television, radio, newspapers, and regional entities interested in Reclamation's actions.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Alternative 1 - Proposed Action:

Reclamation will allow TCID to demolish and remove the Factory District house, the St. Clair District house, and the Fernley District garage. For the Smart District house, Reclamation will transfer ownership of the house, and the two-acre easement on which it is located, to the State of Nevada, allowing the State to coordinate disposal of the structures.

2.2 Alternative 2 - No Action:

Reclamation would not allow TCID to demolish or remove the Factory District house, the St. Clair District house, and the Fernley District garage. Reclamation would not transfer ownership of the Smart District ditch rider house to the State. The hazard that exists to human health and safety would continue to exist.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVRIONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Environmental resources potentially impacted by the alternatives and other issues of concern are described in this section. The impacts include identifying any direct, indirect, or cumulative effects.

3.1 Site Description/Affected Environment:

The St. Clair District house is located on private land, within Reclamation's Newlands Project right-of-way. The vegetation surrounding the house has been subjected to heavy disturbance for decades. There are some large, mature cottonwood trees around the house, and the understory consists of bare ground, short grass, and abandoned ornamental shrubs.

The Smart District house and garage are located on a 2-acre Reclamation easement on State of Nevada land. The vegetation surrounding the house has been subjected to heavy disturbance for decades. There are several large, mature cottonwood trees around the house, and the understory consists of bare ground, short grass, tall weeds, and abandoned ornamental shrubs.

The Factory District house is located on Reclamation land. The house is surrounded primarily by bare, sandy soils, with some sparse short grass and a few large trees.

The Fernley District garage is bordered on two sides by compacted dirt roadbed. The interspersed areas consist of bare, sandy soils and a few nearby tall trees.

3.2 Environmental Consequences:

The following resources are not discussed in this EA: economics, hydrology, climate, soils, floodplains and wetlands, fisheries, geology, noise, visual resources, mineral resources, recreation, land use, transportation, topography, energy, or hazardous waste. Impacts to these resources were considered but not analyzed in detail because they are not affected by the project.

3.2.1 *No Action Alternative*:

There would be no effects and no change from current conditions from the No Action Alternative to any of the resources analyzed in this EA.

3.2.2 *Proposed Action Alternative*:

3.2.2.1 Wildlife

During the demolition and removal of the houses and their associated structures, local wildlife may be displaced by the noise and disturbance. These potential effects to wildlife would be minimal and temporary.

3.2.2.2 Threatened and Endangered Species

There are no threatened or endangered species in the houses or within their immediate vicinity.

3.2.2.3 Water Resources

There would be no impacts to groundwater from the demolition activities of the Proposed Action Alternative. The demolition and removal activities would have a very small impact area, and would have no effect on water resources.

3.2.2.4 Air Quality

Current air quality in the project area is good. Under the Proposed Action, there may be temporary small increases in fugitive dust emissions from demolition and removal activities. These dust emissions will be short-term and temporary.

3.2.2.5 Vegetation

The vegetation in the vicinity of the ditch rider houses currently consists primarily of low priority weed and grass species, with some mature cottonwood trees. The demolition and removal of the houses would temporarily impact the vegetation immediately surrounding them over the short-term, though this impact will be short-term and temporary.

3.2.2.6 Historic and Cultural Resources

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, is the primary legislation that outlines the Federal government's responsibility to cultural resources. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that Federal agencies take into consideration the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. Cultural resources is a term used to describe both archaeological sites, depicting evidence of past human use of the landscape and the built environment, which is represented in structures such as dams, canals, and buildings. Historic properties are cultural resources that are listed on or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). The 36 CFR Part 800 regulations implement Section 106 of the NHPA and outline the procedures necessary for compliance with the NHPA.

Compliance with the Section 106 process follows a series of steps that are designed to identify if cultural resources are present and to what level they will be affected by the proposed Federal undertaking. The Federal agency must first determine if the proposed action is the type of action that has the potential to affect historic properties. Once that has been determined and an action, or undertaking, has been identified, the Federal agency must identify interested parties, determine the area of potential effect (APE), conduct cultural resource inventories, determine if historic properties are present within the APE, and assess effects on any identified historic properties. The Federal agency consults with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on agency determinations and findings and seeks their concurrence with the Federal agency findings.

No Action Alternative:
Under the no action alternative, Reclamation would not move forward with any action and the ditchrider houses would remain in place. There would be no undertaking as defined by Section 301 of the NHPA (16 USC 470). Without an undertaking, Reclamation would not initiate Section 106 of the NHPA. The condition of cultural resources would be the same as under the existing conditions. No impacts to cultural resources are associated with this no action alternative.

Proposed Action Alternative:
The activities associated with the proposed action alternative include disposing of all four ditchrider houses and their associated buildings. Three of these complexes would be demolished and the fourth would be turned over to the State of Nevada. The activities for this alternative constitutes an undertaking as defined by Section 301 of the NHPA (16 USC 470), and therefore compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA is necessary. A cultural resources field inspection of the four ditchrider houses was conducted on December 13-14, 2006, and January 22, 2009. A total of thirteen cultural resources at the four ditchrider sites were identified within the APE. Reclamation applied the National Register criteria for evaluation (36 CFR Part 60.4) to these cultural resources and determined that none of the cultural resources within the APE are eligible for the National Register. Based on this information, Reclamation consulted with the Nevada SHPO on March 10, 2009, for concurrence that the demolition and removal of the four former ditchrider houses and their associated buildings will result in a determination of no historic properties affected pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1). SHPO responded with additional questions on April 14, 2009. Reclamation submitted the supplemental information to SHPO on May 29, 2009, and SHPO concurred with Reclamation's determinations of eligibility and finding of no historic properties affected in a telephone conversation between SHPO and Reclamation staff on June 3, 2009. Reclamation has satisfied its cultural resource compliance. Written concurrence is still forthcoming and is anticipated to be received July 2009.

3.2.2.7 Indian Trust Assets

Indian Trust Resources are legal interests in property or natural resources held in trust by the United States for Indian Tribes or individuals. The Secretary of the Interior is the trustee for the United States on behalf of Indian Tribes. Examples of trust resources are lands, minerals, hunting and fishing rights, and water rights. There are no trust resources within the affected area of the ditch rider houses demolition and removal.

3.2.2.8 Environmental Justice

Executive Order No. 12898, Environmental Justice, is "intended to promote nondiscrimination in Federal programs substantially affecting human health and the environment, and to provide minority and low-income communities' access to public information on, and an opportunity for participation in, matters relating to human health and the environment." It requires each federal agency to achieve environmental justice as part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high

and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

EPA guidelines for evaluating potential adverse environmental effects of projects require specific identification of minority populations when a minority population either exceeds 50 percent of the population of the affected area or represents a meaningfully greater increment of the affected population than of the population of some other appropriate geographic unit.

The Proposed Action Alternative would not disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations within the community.

4.0 OTHER NEPA CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Cumulative Impacts

There will be no effect on environmental resources from cumulative impacts with regards to the demolition and removal of the four former ditch rider houses.

4.2 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments

Irreversible commitments are decisions affecting renewable resources such as soils, wetlands and waterfowl habitat. Such decisions are considered irreversible because their implementation would affect a resource that has deteriorated to the point that renewal can occur only over a long period of time or at great expense, or because they would cause the resource to be destroyed or removed.

Irretrievable commitment of natural resources means loss of production or use of resources as a result of a decision. It represents opportunities forgone for the period of time that a resource cannot be used. Irretrievable refers to the permanent loss of a resource including production, harvest, or use of natural resources. For example, production or loss of agricultural lands can be irretrievable, while the action itself may not be irreversible.

The demolition and removal of the four former ditch rider houses would not result in any operational changes or other physical impacts that would irreversibly or irretrievably commit renewable resources from this federal action.

5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

Caryn Huntt DeCarlo – Natural Resource Specialist, Bureau of Reclamation

Rinda Tisdale-Hein – Wildlife Biologist, Bureau of Reclamation

Pete Neugebauer – Realty Specialist, Bureau of Reclamation

BranDee Bruce – Architectural Historian, Bureau of Reclamation

Andrea Minor – Natural Resource Specialist, Bureau of Reclamation