

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

Vegetation and Sediment Maintenance Program at Los Banos Detention Dam

FONSI-09-100

Recommended by:

Shauna McDonald
Wildlife Biologist
South-Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Concurred by:

Chuck Siek
Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist
South-Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Concurred by:

Chief, Resource Management Division
South-Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Approved by:

Laura Myers
Deputy Area Manager
South-Central California Area Office

Date: _____



In accordance with Section 102 (2) (c) of 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 South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) finds that the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the proposed vegetation and sediment removal activities at the Los Banos Detention Dam (LBDD). This Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) is supported by the attached Environmental Assessment, (EA) *Vegetation and Sediment Maintenance Program at Los Banos Detention Dam* (EA-08-34).

Background

Both Reclamation and the Department of Water Resources' (DWR's) Division of Safety of Dams have completed numerous inspections of the LBDD and have classified it as high risk. The water is designed to flow away from the dam, following its natural channel. Over time, cattails and tules have grown around this lower basin and the discharge path, preventing proper drainage and causing water to back up into the surrounding area. The dam also has a toe drain which is the primary source of warning if the dam is experiencing problems with holding water. With the heavy growth of vegetation and improper drainage, this valuable tool has been rendered useless. On August 22, 2008 DWR's San Luis Field Division performed the LBDD Slide Gate exercise. After a small release from LBDD, water backed up on and across Canyon Road, the access road for Los Banos Reservoir. The water that was released ponded and caused two State Park visitors to sustain vehicle damage.

Proposed Action

Reclamation and DWR propose to implement a 10-year program to remove accumulated vegetation and sediment at the LBDD. The maintenance program would be conducted by DWR's Civil Maintenance Branch of the San Luis Field Division Operations and Maintenance once every three to five years. Work would include the removal of vegetation and sediment from: the spillway of LBDD, the creek, and the Dam face. Maintenance activities would involve removal of emergent wetland vegetation, primarily cattails (*Typha* sp.). A biannual herbicidal spray program using Rodeo (no surfactant), or similar products, would be established.

Findings

Aesthetics

No construction work would occur in the recreational areas themselves (the reservoir and camping/picnicking areas), and the Proposed Action will not create any nighttime light or glare or interfere with any scenic views. As no visual resources will be impacted, there will be no significant impact.

Air Quality/Climate Change

The Proposed Action will result in short-term emissions of vehicle and equipment exhaust and fine particulate matter (PM₁₀). However, as a result of the implementation of air quality

protection measures, the Proposed Action will comply not only with Federal requirements, but with the more stringent California State requirements. Therefore, there will be no significant impact on air quality. The Proposed Action will not exceed the California Air Resource Board's significance threshold for greenhouse gas emissions, and therefore will not have a significant impact on global climate change.

Biological Resources

No Federally listed or proposed species or critical habitat will be impacted. A pre-activity survey will be conducted for the San Joaquin kit fox to verify that no kit foxes have moved into the proposed action area, between 30 and 14 days prior to the start of work, and avoidance measures will be implemented. With the implementation of conservation measures, no more than a minor impact will occur on the San Joaquin whipsnake and certain raptors, including the burrowing owl. The Proposed Action will not result in any take as defined under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Therefore, no significant impact will occur to biological resources.

Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action was determined to be the type of activity that does not have the potential to affect historic properties pursuant to the regulations at 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

Hydrology and Water Quality

Under the Proposed Action, flow in the creek would improve and the San Luis Canal would be better-protected from flooding. The Proposed Action will provide an overall benefit to water resources. All measures contained in the Streambed Alteration Agreement issued to the Department of Water Resources, and the Water Quality Certification obtained by Reclamation will be implemented and will ensure that no significant impacts occur on hydrology and water quality.

Recreational Resources

The only impact on recreational resources will be a temporary impact on access, but this will be lessened by using signs that warn visitors about the work and by having flagmen onsite. Safe access to recreational resources will continue and so this impact is not significant.

Wetlands/Waters of the United States

The Proposed Action will avoid and minimize fill of and indirect impacts on any waters of the U.S. as much as possible. Reclamation will comply with all requirements of any permit issued by the Corps under section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and DWR will comply with all conditions of the Streambed Alteration Agreement. This will ensure that significant impacts on waters of the U.S. will not occur.

Cumulative Effects

The Proposed Action will not result in any direct or indirect impacts on aesthetic or cultural resources, and will therefore not contribute cumulatively toward any impacts on those resources. Impacts on biological resources will be minimized to a level that will not impact populations. Due to the fact that the proposed action area is owned by Reclamation, it is largely protected from future impacts on habitats in the area. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not result in more than a very minor cumulative impact on biological resources. Air quality impacts will be

minimized to a level that ensures compliance with both Federal and State standards and will therefore only result in minor cumulative impacts. Greenhouse gas emissions will remain below the significance level and so will not contribute significantly to cumulative impacts on global climate change. The Streambed Alteration Agreement and Water Quality Certification will ensure that cumulative impacts on hydrology and water quality are no more than minimal. Recreational resource impact will be minimal and not contribute cumulatively to impacts on this resource (no other impacts on recreational resources have been identified). Waters of the U.S. will not be subject to a significant cumulative impact because DWR will obtain and comply with a Streambed Alteration Agreement and Reclamation will obtain and comply with a section 404 Clean Water Act permit.