

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West


Fort Bidwell Well Development and Water Storage Tanks for Fire Suppression

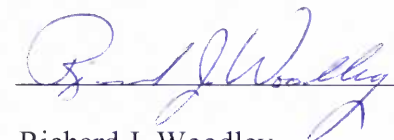
Fort Bidwell, California

Finding of No Significant Impact

FONSI 10-14-MP

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Finding of No Significant Impact

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) finds that providing funds to the Fort Bidwell Indian Community under the provisions of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) (Public Law [P.L.] 111-5) to drill test wells and to make one well operable, and to install water storage tanks, is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA), *Fort Bidwell Well Development and Water Storage Tanks for Fire Suppression, Environmental Assessment*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Background

Under the *State's Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991* as amended (P.L. 109-234)], Reclamation is distributing \$40 million from ARRA to fund emergency drought relief projects. In February 2009, while the State of California was in the third consecutive year of a drought, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a drought emergency.

The Fort Bidwell Indian Community (Tribe) is a federally recognized Indian Tribe. The Fort Bidwell Indian Reservation (Reservation) is located on the eastern slope of the Warner Mountains in the northeast corner of Modoc County, California. The Reservation was established by Executive Order on October 9, 1866. The Reservation is located in a remote and isolated portion of northern California, and is approximately 3,500 acres in size.

The purpose of the project is for Reclamation to provide ARRA funds to the Tribe for the purposes of drilling test wells, making one test well operable, installing water storage tanks, electrical power and pipelines.

Finding of No Significant Impact Determination

Based on the analysis of the *Fort Bidwell Well Development and Water Storage Tanks EA*, the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. This finding is based upon the *context* and *intensity* of the project's impacts as described below:

Context:

The Proposed Action is to:

- 1) Provide ARRA funds to the Tribe for the purpose of drilling test wells and making one well operable. The production well would be fitted with a submersible pump and housing. Water pipelines and electrical power would connect the production well to water storage tanks.
- 2) The size and number of water storage tanks has not been finalized. The Tribe is seeking to have a total storage capacity of 20,000 gallons. Several options are being

considered: 1) place four 5,000 or two 10,000 gallon water storage tanks next to the production well; or place four 5,000 or two 10,000 gallon water storage tanks next to the existing storage tank or a combination of 1) and 2) for a total 20,000 gallon capacity. Water pipelines would connect the water storage tanks to standpipes where firefighting equipment would be able to refill. The EA considered both options in the impacts analysis.

Intensity:

The Council on Environmental Quality uses ten considerations in evaluating *intensity* (40 CFR 1508.27(b)):

- (1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

No adverse impacts have been identified. There would be minor impacts to water resources, wildlife and vegetation. Most impacts would be short-term during construction of the wells, water storage tanks, pipelines and electrical power. There would be a minor increase in potential for sedimentation. Best management practices would be implemented to reduce potential for erosion. Construction would take place prior to the winter rainy season. The Proposed Action would not disproportionately affect minority or low-income communities. The Proposed Action could temporarily increase employment during construction, and would ensure a supply of water for fire suppression purposes, separate from water used for drinking purposes.

- (2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

The Proposed Action would have no impact on public health and safety. During construction, there could be a negligible increase in risk to worker safety during use of heavy equipment during installation of the wells, water storage tanks, pipelines and electrical power. Precautions would be taken to reduce risk to employees. A safety zone around the construction areas would be maintained to avoid risk of injury to the public during construction.

- (3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

There are no parks, wild and scenic rivers, and ecologically critical areas designated in the project area. The new well site, water storage tanks, water pipelines and electrical power would temporarily impact a vegetation community made up of juniper, sagebrush and annual grasses. This vegetation community is not a sensitive or unique resource and is abundant locally and regionally. Disturbed areas (with the exception of the well and storage tank sites) would be returned to their original condition upon completing the project. There there

would be permanent loss of .02 acre of juniper and sagebrush, and .07 acre of sagebrush/annual grasses as a result of the Proposed Action.

- (4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

There are no known sensitive or controversial issues associated with the Proposed Action. The Tribe has been involved in the preparation of this EA.

- (5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

There are no uncertain or unique or unknown risks associated with the Proposed Action.

- (6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration*

The Proposed Action does not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision without future consideration. Any future projects on Tribal lands would be analyzed on their own merits and implemented, or not, independent of the acceptance of this EA.

- (7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions have been considered in the *Cumulative Effects* section of the EA for each resource which could be impacted by the Proposed Action.

The cumulative effects analysis has determined that the project would not contribute significantly to cumulative effects.

- (8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss of destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The Proposed Action is the type of activity that has the potential to affect historic properties on the Rancheria. Reclamation determined that there will be no adverse effects to historic properties as a result of project implementation; therefore, no cultural resources would be impacted as a result of implementing the Proposed Action. Reclamation consulted with the SHPO, as well as with the Fort Bidwell Indian Community on the same basis as the SHPO since this project is located on Tribal lands, regarding this determination. Concurrence from the SHPO and Fort Bidwell Indian

Community is pending. The project will not be implemented until the Section 106 compliance process has been completed.

- (9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

The Proposed Action area is not located within designated critical habitat. Based on known observations, habitat suitability, and a records review of the California Natural Diversity Database and Fish and Wildlife Service website, no candidate, threatened or endangered species has been identified within the project area. There would be no effect to special-status species as a result of implementation of the Proposed Action.

- (10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The Proposed Action does not violate any federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.