

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

5.1 Best Management Practices

The following BMPs will be implemented to avoid or minimize potential effects to the resources within the Minidoka North Side RMP Study Area that could occur if the Preferred Alternative were implemented. Although not listed here, the management actions identified in the Preferred Alternative as needed for proper stewardship of resources are also considered to be environmental commitments.

5.1.1 Landscape Preservation and Impact Avoidance

1. Developed facilities will complement with and be subservient to the surrounding landscape wherever possible.
2. Disturbed areas resulting from any construction will be aggressively revegetated.
3. To the maximum extent practicable, all existing native trees, shrubs, and other vegetation will be preserved and protected from construction operations and equipment except where clearing operations are required for permanent structures, approved construction roads, or excavation operations.
4. To the maximum extent practicable, all maintenance yards, field offices, and staging areas will be arranged to preserve trees, shrubs, and other vegetation.
5. Clearing will be restricted to that area needed for construction. In critical habitat areas including, but not limited to, wetlands and riparian areas, clearing may be restricted to only a few feet beyond the areas required for construction.
6. Stream corridors, wetlands, riparian areas, steep slopes, or other critical environmental areas will not be used for equipment or materials storage or stockpiling; construction staging or maintenance; field offices; hazardous material or fuel storage, handling, or transfer; or temporary access roads, in order to reduce environmental damage.
7. Excavated or graded materials will not be stockpiled or deposited on or within 100 feet of any steep slopes (defined by industry standards), wetlands, riparian areas, or stream banks (including seasonally active ephemeral streams without woody or herbaceous vegetation growing in the channel bottom), or on native vegetation.
8. To the maximum extent possible, staging areas, access roads, and other site disturbances will be located in disturbed areas, not in native or naturally occurring vegetation.
9. The width of all new temporary and permanent roads will be kept to the absolute minimum needed for safety, avoiding wetland and riparian areas where possible. Turnouts and staging areas will not be placed in wetlands.

5.1.2 Erosion and Sediment Control

1. The design and construction of facilities will employ applicable recognized BMPs to prevent possible soil erosion and subsequent water quality impacts.
2. The planting of grasses, forbs, trees, or shrubs beneficial to wildlife, or the placement of riprap, sand bags, sod, erosion mats, bale dikes, mulch, or excelsior blankets will be used to prevent and minimize erosion and siltation during construction and during the period needed to reestablish permanent local native vegetative cover on disturbed sites located outside of landscaped areas. Appropriate landscaping plants and materials will be used for such purposes in landscaped areas.
3. Final erosion control and site restoration measures will be initiated as soon as a particular area is no longer needed for construction, stockpiling, or access. Clearing schedules will be arranged to minimize exposure of soils.
4. Cuts and fills for relocated and new roads will be sloped to facilitate revegetation.
5. Soil or rock stockpiles, excavated materials, or excess soil materials will not be placed near sensitive habitats, including water channels, wetlands, riparian areas, and on native or naturally occurring vegetation, where they may erode into these habitats or be washed away by high water or storm runoff. Waste piles will be revegetated using suitable native species after they are shaped to provide a natural appearance.

5.1.3 Biological Resources

1. Rare and sensitive species clearances described below will be conducted after project authorization, but prior to the start of construction.
2. If native plant communities must be used for access roads or staging areas, site clearances at the appropriate time of year for the species involved will be conducted by qualified biologists to ensure sensitive species are not impacted. Any established search protocols will be followed. Additional information concerning avoidance of rare and threatened or endangered species is presented in Sections 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7.
3. Where appropriate, construction activities that could impact native fish will be undertaken during non-spawning periods.
4. During the 15-year period covered by this RMP, species not currently protected under the Endangered Species Act may be listed and species that are not considered to be rare may become so. If any such species occur on Reclamation lands, Reclamation would develop and enforce appropriate site disturbance, time of year, and distance restrictions in areas harboring Federal and state designated species of special concern (including Federally designated endangered or threatened species and rare species).
5. The priority for protection and recovery of threatened, endangered, and rare species is a two step process through which it would first be determined if suitable habitat types for these species are present in the vicinity of a proposed action. If suitable habitat is present, site clearances following established survey protocols would be conducted before actions are implemented.

6. Weed control efforts using herbicides on Reclamation lands will be administered by a state-certified applicator, which is a state requirement for county applicators but not for other persons.

5.1.4 Site Restoration and Revegetation

1. Construction areas, including storage yards, will limit the amount of waste material and trash accumulations at all times.
2. All unused materials and trash will be removed from construction and storage sites during the final phase of work. All removed material will be placed in approved sanitary landfills or storage sites, and work areas will be left to conform to the natural landscape.
3. Upon completion of construction, any land disturbed outside the limits of reservoir pools, permanent roads, and other permanent facilities will be graded to provide proper drainage and blend with the natural contour of the land. Following grading, the disturbed areas will be revegetated using plants native to the area, suitable for the site conditions, and beneficial to wildlife.
4. Where applicable, Reclamation and contractors will consult with the following agencies to determine the recommended plant species composition, seeding rates, and planting dates:
 - Idaho Department of Fish and Game
 - U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
 - U.S. Bureau of Land Management
5. Native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees appropriate for site conditions and surrounding vegetation will be included on a plant list developed during site design. Species chosen for a site will be matched for site drainage, climate, shading, resistance to erosion, soil type, slope, aspect, and vegetation management goals. Wetland and riparian species will be used in revegetating disturbed wetlands. Upland revegetation shall match the plant list to the site's soil type, topographic position, elevation, and surrounding communities. Local native species will be used in all areas that are not landscaped.

5.1.5 Pollution Prevention

1. All Federal and State laws related to control and abatement of water pollution will be complied with. All waste material and sewage from construction activities or Project-related features will be disposed of according to Federal and State pollution control regulations.
2. Construction contractors may be required to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit as established under Public Law 92-500 and amended by the Clean Water Act (Public Law 92-217).
3. Construction specifications shall require construction methods that will prevent entrance or accidental spillage of pollutants into flowing or dry watercourses and underground water sources. Potential pollutants and wastes include, but are not limited to, refuse, garbage, cement, concrete,

sewage effluent, industrial waste, oil and other petroleum products, aggregate processing tailings, mineral salts, drilling mud, and thermal pollution.

4. Eroded materials shall be prevented from entering streams or watercourses during dewatering activities associated with structure foundations or earthwork operations adjacent to, or encroaching on, streams or watercourses.
5. Any construction wastewater discharged into surface waters will be essentially free of settling material. Water pumped from behind cofferdams and wastewater from aggregate processing, concrete batching, or other construction operations shall not enter streams or watercourses without water quality treatment. Turbidity control methods may include settling ponds; gravel-filter entrapment dikes; approved flocculating processes not harmful to fish or other aquatic life; recirculation systems for washing aggregates; or other approved methods.
6. Any riprap shall be free of contaminants and not contribute significantly to the turbidity of the reservoir.
7. Appropriate controls to reduce stormwater pollutant loads in post-construction site runoff shall be followed. The appropriate facilities shall be properly designed, installed, and maintained to provide water quality treatment for runoff originating from all recreational facilities.
8. All parking lots and marinas shall be designed to promote efficient vehicle and boat traffic to prevent congestion and pollution.
9. Waste facilities shall be connected, whenever possible, to sanitary sewer systems instead of septic tanks to avoid water quality problems from failed tanks.

5.1.6 Noise and Air Pollution Prevention

1. Contractors will be required to comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations concerning prevention and control of noise and air pollution. Contractors are expected to use reasonably available methods and devices to control, prevent, and reduce atmospheric emissions or discharges of atmospheric contaminants and noise.
2. Contractors will be required to reduce dust from construction operations and prevent it from damaging dwellings or causing a nuisance to people. Methods such as wetting exposed soil or roads where dust is generated by passing vehicles will be employed.

5.1.7 Cultural Resource Site Protection

1. If necessary, Reclamation will prepare a Cultural Resources Management Plan (CRMP) to define long-term management and protection goals and processes. Conditions under which Reclamation would consider developing a CRMP would be tied to the nature of impacts happening to a particular cultural site or sites, the magnitude of such impacts, and the National Register quality of the site or sites being impacted.
2. If there are significant cultural resource sites that may be affected by a Reclamation action (including TCP's), Reclamation will consult with the SHPO and Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes about appropriate actions to take to protect those sites.

3. Cultural resource management requirements and goals shall be integrated into other management plans completed under the RMP, including the comprehensive wildlife management plan, fire management plan, and IPM Plan.
4. When implementing habitat restoration activities, plant resources that have traditional importance to the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes shall be used, insofar as these plants accomplish the habitat restoration goal and are reasonably comparable in cost.
5. Information shall be provided about the prehistory and history of the RMP area, for the enjoyment of users.
6. Reclamation will coordinate with the BLM during the their resource management planning on lands adjacent to Reclamation's boundary, to identify actions they might implement that would aid in protecting cultural resources on Reclamation's lands.
7. Location-specific cultural resource clearances shall be obtained when the agency acts to enhance recreation and wildlife. Avoid adverse effects to significant cultural properties by relocating or redesigning any proposed development.
8. Cultural sites shall be stabilized or protected when avoidance is not possible. Test excavations will be conducted as necessary to determine if the sites are eligible for the National Register. Consultation, per 36CFR800, will also be conducted to determine site eligibility, project effect, and appropriate treatment of adversely affected Register-eligible sites.
9. Actions to protect human burials shall be initiated as soon as possible if they are reported to be exposed or endangered by reservoir operations, natural erosion, or land use. Unless the burials are clearly non-Indian, tribes potentially affiliated with the remains will be consulted upon discovery of a burial, and procedures for protection, treatment, and disposition of the remains will be worked out with those tribes in accordance with NAGPRA.
10. Archaeological collections shall be curated, in most cases, at the Southeastern Idaho Regional Archeological Center, Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho (except NAGPRA burials and cultural items). When NAGPRA burials or cultural items are recovered, procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 10 for consultation and custody will be followed.
11. If consultation with Indian tribes reveals Indian sacred sites to be present that are being adversely affected by land use, Reclamation will implement actions to avoid or reduce those impacts.

5.1.8 Miscellaneous Comments

Reclamation-issued land use licenses, leases, and permits will contain sufficient language and stipulations to help protect existing resources and help mitigate possible conflicts among the various users and between visitors and adjacent land owners.

Specific mitigation requirements would be determined during site-specific facility designs. Access for and use of all planned improvements by persons with disabilities is required under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. All new facilities will be installed, and all existing facilities will be retrofitted in accordance with current accessibility standards, including all access routes.

5.2 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures are environmental commitments intended to compensate for impacts that cannot be avoided through implementation of BMPs.

5.2.1 Soils

All roads, trails, and new or upgraded facilities shall employ designs that will not contribute to short- or long-term soil loss during and following construction and revegetation.

5.2.2 Vegetation

In addition to Reclamation's overall planned increase in noxious and invasive weed control efforts, all sites that are disturbed for facilities and trail construction shall be actively monitored for these plants. All infestations will be treated in accordance with accepted methods and agreements with IDFG and local counties and in accordance with Reclamation's IPM Plan.

If grazing is permitted on parcels with native vegetation, that is, parcels where cheatgrass is a component of sagebrush dominated landscapes, it shall be timed to occur only in late fall or early spring when cheatgrass is green and is most palatable to livestock and native vegetation is unavailable. If soil is saturated with water, grazing shall be postponed until soil dries to avoid hoof impact damage to soils and soil biotic crusts. Once cheatgrass is under control, the site shall be reseeded to native shrubs, grasses, and forbs and livestock shall be removed. Livestock will be kept out of playas and wetlands and a 200-foot perimeter around these areas shall be maintained to avoid damage to these resources. By adhering to these restrictions, livestock grazing is not likely to reduce native grasses and forbs on those parcels with a mixture of native vegetation and cheatgrass.

The state-certified weed applicator would have knowledge of native plants and specific training on identifying sensitive plant species so that these plants can be avoided during spraying.

5.2.3 Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species

Site clearances for pygmy rabbits following established protocols would be conducted in all parcels with potentially suitable habitat before any of the activities that may be undertaken or permitted under Alternative B would be implemented. These activities include, but are not limited to, agricultural and grazing leases, sand and gravel extraction, habitat improvements and rehabilitation, and designation of roads as open to motorized vehicles. These activities would not be permitted or undertaken on parcels where pygmy rabbits are found in order to avoid all potential impacts on pygmy rabbits. Appropriate surveys in suitable habitat would also be undertaken before weed control and dump cleanup activities, which would continue as part of normal management activities. Weed control and dump cleanup would be modified as needed to avoid effects on pygmy rabbits.

Continued unauthorized use of dirt roads and trails by motorized vehicles and ad hoc camping have the potential of direct and indirect adverse impacts on pygmy rabbit habitat. Reclamation will develop and enforce an Access Management Plan for parcels with high habitat values, including

areas of actual or potential pygmy rabbit habitat. Pygmy rabbit and pygmy rabbit habitat surveys will be conducted on relevant parcels resulting from work/project proposals. Site clearances will be conducted for the purpose of determining the presence of pygmy rabbits and suitable pygmy rabbit habitat. If pygmy rabbits, or suitable habitat are found, all Reclamation activities and allowable public activities will be evaluated and conducted in a manner so as to protect and preserve the rabbits and their habitat. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: modifying project designs, modifying techniques, project/work relocation, project/work cancellation, and limiting public and vehicle access. In addition, habitat enhancement and protection measures will be implemented on parcels where pygmy rabbits, or pygmy rabbit sign, are found. Reclamation will prioritize road closures and enforcement actions and immediately focus its initial efforts on those parcels with better stands of native vegetation including sagebrush so that potential pygmy rabbit habitat is not further degraded by motorized vehicles. Reclamation will also continue to conduct informal field surveys of its lands to identify those that may harbor pygmy rabbits. In the event of a listing, formal field surveys of all potential pygmy rabbit habitat in the RMP Study Area would be conducted. Any parcels on which pygmy rabbits are found will be immediately closed to all vehicle use and ad hoc camping. These actions will substantially minimize, and eventually avoid all potential impacts on pygmy rabbits and actual or potential pygmy rabbit habitat.

5.2.4 Cultural Resources

Mitigation under all alternatives would occur if cultural resources are present that are eligible for the National Register, and if they are being adversely impacted by reservoir operations or land uses or are being damaged by natural agents. If an action is planned that could adversely impact historic properties, Reclamation would investigate options to avoid the site. Cultural resource management actions for impacted sites would be planned and implemented in accordance with consultation requirements defined in 36 CFR 800, using methods consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines.