

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

South Bay Administrative and Maintenance Facilities

**Project No. 2015-033, FONSI No. 2015-02, Horsetooth Reservoir
Colorado-Big Thompson Project**

Finding of No Significant Impact

Approved: Jaclyn L. Gould Date: October 21, 2015



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Great Plains Region
Eastern Colorado Area Office**

October 2015

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

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 the NEPA (40 CFR Part 1500-1508), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed South Bay administrative and maintenance facilities at Horsetooth Reservoir of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project (C-BT Project). The EA analyzes a No Action and Proposed Action alternatives. Based on the following, Reclamation has determined that the Proposed Action will not result in a significant impact on the human environment.

Background

Reclamation constructed the C-BT Project as a multi-purpose water supply project and is one of the largest and most complex natural resource developments undertaken by Reclamation. It consists of over 100 structures integrated into a trans-mountain water diversion system. Located entirely within the State of Colorado, the Project is spread over 250 square miles. It stores, regulates and diverts water from the Colorado River on the western slope and delivers it to the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. Authorized Project purposes include supplemental irrigation, municipal and industrial (M&I) uses, and hydroelectric power.

In 1954, the Larimer County Parks District was formed and Larimer County assumed responsibility for administering recreation at Horsetooth, Carter, Flatiron and Pinewood reservoirs. In 1965, the Federal Water Project Recreation Act (P.L. 89-72) provided for the planning, land acquisition and development of recreational potential at existing water development projects. Federal cost-sharing of up to one-half of the cost of planning, operations, maintenance and replacement is allowed. These funds depend on implementation of a current Resource Management Plan (RMP) and satisfaction of NEPA requirements.

Purpose and Need

The primary purpose is to replace existing facilities at Horsetooth Reservoir -South Bay to meet current and future needs as previously identified in Reclamation's 2007 RMP/EA. The purpose of the 2007 RMP/EA was to provide formal program and policy guidelines enabling the orderly use, enhancement and management of Horsetooth and three other reservoirs and surrounding lands.

Proposed Action

Under the proposed action, Reclamation would authorize Larimer County Parks to construct and maintain new administrative and maintenance facilities at Horsetooth Reservoir-South Bay Campground. The proposed facilities would replace existing structures at South Bay described in the 2007 RMP/EA with some modifications.

Proposed facilities include:

- Construction of a 8,532 square foot (SF) two-story administrative building with offices, reception, lobby, and meeting space.
- Removal of the existing modular office and construction of a 3,400 SF two-story maintenance building with vehicle bays, lockers, storage and break area.
- Construction of a 1,920 SF five-bay storage building, and
- Demolition and removal of the existing garage.

Findings

In the EA, Reclamation evaluated the environmental consequences associated with implementing the Proposed Action and a No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not approve construction of the administrative and maintenance facilities at South Bay. A brief summary of the environmental effects of the Proposed Action is listed below.

Under the proposed action, there would be no new impacts to water quality, vegetation, fish and wildlife, recreation and visual resources from those previously described in the 2007 RMP/ EA. There would be no impacts to hydrology, wetlands, threatened, endangered and sensitive species, socioeconomic, Indain Trust Assets, environmental justice, historic properties, paleontological, and other resources.

Additional discussions related to resource impacts are as follows:

Water Quality—Location and design modifications associated with the proposed action are not anticipated to result in additional changes in water quality. Environmental commitments included best management practices to protect and maintain existing water quality during construction and operation of the new facilities. Larimer County would also obtain required stormwater construction permits and utilize vegetative swales to treat runoff from buildings and parking lots designed to meet County, State and Federal stormwater standards.

Vegetation Resources—Under the Proposed Action, approximately 1.0 acres of native shrubs and grasses and up to 25 ponderosa pine trees would be affected or removed during construction. No vegetation resources would be affected during construction of the maintenance facility. All vegetation resources associated with the proposed action were previously identified in the 2007 RMP/EA and where possible, landscaping would use native seed and plant stock.

Fish and Wildlife Resources—A majority of the project area has been previously disturbed and provides low habitat value. Wildlife may avoid the project area during construction and impact from increased human use and presence as described in the 2007 RMP/EA would continue. Incremental increases and cumulative impacts associated with the proposed action would be minor and are considered insignificant.

Recreation Resources—Under the Proposed Action, about 200 feet of shoreline would be temporarily closed to public use during construction of the administrative facility. All major construction activities would be timed to coincide with periods of lower park visitation.

Visual Resources—Visual changes within South Bay would be negligible. The proposed action includes lands that have been previously developed or disturbed. Additional tree planting to provide view screening of the maintenance yards is also included in the environmental commitments.

Under the proposed action, Reclamation consulted with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). On September 1, 2015, the SHPO concurred with Reclamation's finding of no historic properties affected. Environmental commitments included stop work clauses in the event that resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities.

Cumulative Impacts

The proposed action was included in the cumulative effects analysis conducted for the 2007 RMP/EA. Potential cumulative impacts associated with implementation of 2007 RMP/EA included vegetation resources and public facilities and transportation. The 2007 RMP/EA identified mitigation measures and environmental commitments which include:

- Minimize the area disturbed during construction
- Control runoff from disturbed areas during construction
- Re-vegetate areas as soon as possible after construction
- Minimize construction disturbance in areas where soils are thin
- Construct trails to have the minimal possible widths
- Construct trails to follow topographic contours or to have low slope angles
- Use designated footpaths and sidewalks to ensure the safety of pedestrian traffic.

When considering these environmental commitments, implementation of the proposed action would not result in additional cumulative impacts.

Environmental Commitments

All environmental commitments included in the 2007 RMP/EA continue to be implemented as previously described. The following environmental commitments are directly applicable to the proposed action.

- Erosion control structures, such as waterbars, drain dips, checkdams, culverts, or French drains will be installed, where appropriate, to control water movement and protect soils and vegetation.
- Proper regulatory and informational signing will be posted throughout the reservoir areas informing the public of rules and regulations governing the uses and activities.
- During selection of facilities or trails locations, all efforts will be made to avoid wetlands, riparian areas, cliffs, and steep and/or rocky slopes.
- Temporary recreation closures may be necessary when construction poses a risk to visitor safety or resource damage.
- Minimize the area disturbed during construction

- As much as possible, onsite material will be used for construction.
- Recreation facility development will complement the surrounding landscape as much as practical and will follow: 1) site-specific recreation master plans; 2) design and construction criteria, and 3) development criteria to protect the visual quality of the reservoir area.
- Consult the Reclamation manuals and guidelines for signs and recreation facility design.
- Maintain compliance with the State and local noxious weed laws.
- Reduce competition of undesirable plants with native and/or planted vegetation.
- Clean all heavy equipment before entering and exiting construction sites to minimize transporting weeds.
- Reseed after construction, heavy maintenance, and other soil disturbing activities. The Reclamation approved seed mix is included in the EA. Use clean fill material from weed-free sources. If straw if used for stabilization and erosion control, it must be certified weed-free or weed-seed free.
- Re-vegetate areas within 10-days of final grading after construction based on suitable site conditions.
- All known noxious weed populations at new construction sites will be treated or eliminated prior to project implementation to prevent the spread of these populations.
- No trees suitable for bald eagle roosting will be removed unless they are dead or below the high water line.
- Control runoff from disturbed areas during construction; Build erosion resistance into project design to reduce costly maintenance and restoration; mitigate concurrently with construction (disturbances of more than 1 acre requires a state stormwater discharge permit. More information can be found at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/STORMWATER%20MANAGEMENT%20PLAN%20PREPARATION%20GUIDANCE.pdf>.
- Minimize construction disturbance in areas where soils are thin.
- Where required by state laws, appropriate permits relating to discharge and sedimentation will be obtained prior to construction.
Avoid soil-disturbing actions during periods of heavy rain or wet soils. Periods of heavy snowmelt should also be considered.
- Coordinate with the Larimer County Planning and Environmental Health Departments to minimize contamination from sewer systems and other land uses.
- Design catchment basins, wetlands or other Reclamation approved stormwater control measures to detain and treat runoff from campgrounds and parking lots.
- Utilize vegetative swales with catchment basins or oil/water separator systems to treat any surface runoff from the maintenance yard and parking areas.
Construct trails to have the minimal possible widths.
- No ground-disturbing activities associated with the Proposed Action shall begin prior to the completion of NHPA compliance.
- In the event that possible human remains or cultural/paleontological resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities associated with the Proposed Action, whether on the surface or subsurface, all ground-disturbing activities in the vicinity of the discovery shall cease and Reclamation's Eastern Colorado Area Office archaeologist

shall be notified immediately. Ground-disturbing activities in the vicinity of the discovery shall not be resumed until approved by Reclamation.

- If any additional areas of impact are identified during the course of the Proposed Action, additional NHPA compliance may be required prior to the approval of any ground-disturbing activities.
- Minimize use of outside storage of equipment and establish vegetative screening between the maintenance yard and adjacent neighbors. Stored equipment and supplies shall be in usable condition, well kept or neat, free of weeds and trash, and maintained.