

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FONSI No. 2010-32

Ruedi Round II Water Marketing Program Repayment Contract - City of Rifle

Finding of No Significant Impact

ACTING

Approved

Jeri South

Area Manager

Date

Sept 12, 2011



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

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INTRODUCTION

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared to document the environmental review and evaluation of the Proposed Action in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended. Based on the following finding, Reclamation has determined that implementation of a Ruedi Round II Water Marketing Program Repayment Contract with the City of Rifle (Rifle) will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment as well as no significant adverse cumulative impacts.

BACKGROUND

The primary purpose of Ruedi Dam and Reservoir (Ruedi) is to furnish water required for the protection of western Colorado water users, including present water rights and prospective uses of water. Receipts from the sale of water from Ruedi are applied to pay for operation and maintenance costs and to reimburse construction costs in excess of \$7.6 million. The purpose of the proposed action is to allow Rifle to use Ruedi Dam and Reservoir (Ruedi) water for augmentation under a water repayment contract. The proposed contract would allow for out-of-priority diversions from the Colorado River for Rifle's municipal water supply. Rifle requested the proposed contract to assure that it fulfills its statutory role of providing an adequate supply of water for its water service area in the long term and to ensure augmentation water is available during drought conditions.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Reclamation evaluated the effects of two alternatives, including the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action Alternative, and has selected the latter as the Preferred Alternative. Under this alternative, Reclamation would enter into a contract with Rifle for a total of 200 acre-feet. The contract would allow use of Ruedi water to augment out-of-priority municipal diversions from the Colorado River, as they may currently exist or be modified in the future.

The water would be used primarily for municipal purposes in Rifle's water service area.

FINDINGS

In the attached EA, Reclamation evaluated the environmental consequences associated with implementing the Proposed Action Alternative. The following specific findings were ascertained:

- There would be no significant negative site specific impacts expected to wetlands, floodplains, vegetation, prime farmlands, air quality, cultural resources, Indian trust assets, hydrology, recreation, threatened and endangered species, or environmental justice as a result of the issuance of the proposed contract.
- Issuance of the proposed contract is anticipated to have negligible direct and indirect impacts to hydrology, recreation, and the associated tourism economy compared to current conditions, none of which exceed or approach the scale of those evaluated in the

Ruedi Reservoir, Colorado, Round II Water Marketing Program, Final Supplement to the Environmental Statement (RRII FSES).

- The expected cumulative impacts of the proposed contract issuance, in addition to the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities within the analysis area are expected to be negligible; not greater than (or even approaching) those evaluated in the RRII FSES, Ruedi Reservoir 2012 Agreement Final Environmental Assessment (2012 Agreement EA), or the Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO).
- No further Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation is required for the proposed contract for the endangered fish species, including the Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, humpback chub, and bonytailed chub. The PBO issued in 1999 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service addressed the effects of all Federal and non-Federal depletions from the 15-Mile Reach, considered all existing and future operations and depletions from Ruedi by including a comprehensive list of actions to be implemented and funded by the recipients of the PBO, including continuation of Ruedi repayment contracts. If the actions considered in the PBO are funded and implemented as anticipated, they would affect, but would not jeopardize, the continued existence of the four fish. The Proposed Action Alternative is not expected to result in impacts greater than those determined in the PBO.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

The contract would be subject to all requirements to maintain minimum instream flows detailed in the Fry-Ark Operating Principals and by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB). In order to reduce the potential that the proposed contract would cause a violation of the CWCB instream flows, Ruedi contracts and agreements issued after the establishment of an instream flow are subject to all requirements to maintain CWCB's minimum instream flows.