

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Lower Colorado Region
Phoenix Area Office

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

PROPOSED SEDIMENT FILL AND REAPPLICATION OF
ROTENONE IN BONITA CREEK

Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area
Graham County, Arizona

Approved: _____



Randy N. Chandler, Acting Manager
Phoenix Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation

Date: _____

1-24-11

FONSI No.: PXAO-11-01

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Reclamation has issued a Revised Supplement (Reclamation 2010) to the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on Native Fish Restoration in Bonita Creek, Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, Graham County, Arizona (Reclamation and Bureau of Land Management 2007). Released in February 2007, the and associated Reclamation Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI; Reclamation 2007) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) FONSI/ Decision Record (BLM 2007) considered the environmental effects of the Bonita Creek native fish restoration project, which involved construction of a fish barrier, one-time use of rotenone (CFT Legumine®) to eradicate nonnative fishes, salvage of native resident fishes including endangered Gila chub, and repatriation of four species of federally-listed fish (Gila topminnow, desert pupfish, loach minnow, and spikedace) within a 1.7-mile reach of lower Bonita Creek. The 2007 EA, however, did not consider the possible effects for additional use of rotenone after the federally-listed fish species were stocked into the stream.

Reclamation completed construction of the Bonita Creek fish barrier in September 2008. Salvage of native fishes and renovation of the 1.7-mile reach of Bonita Creek between the barrier and a City of Safford water-system dike using CFT Legumine® was undertaken by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) with assistance from BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and Reclamation in October 2008. Following this renovation, native unlisted and federally-listed fishes including salvaged Gila chub and repatriated loach minnow, spikedace, desert pupfish, and Gila topminnow were stocked into the stream. Nonnative mosquitofish, fathead minnow, and green sunfish have since repopulated the renovated area. Subsequent attempts to remove these nonnative fishes utilizing mechanical methods have not been successful, and the agencies (AGFD, BLM, Reclamation, and FWS) believe at least one additional chemical renovation of the stream will be necessary to protect the native resident and repatriated fish populations. In addition, Reclamation and the cooperating agencies determined the success of any additional renovation(s) and associated management actions would be enhanced if a ponded area that formed immediately upstream of the constructed fish barrier was filled with sediment prior to re-treatment. Therefore, Reclamation prepared a Revised Supplement to the 2007 EA that addressed effects of additional piscicide treatments and associated actions, including the placement of fill, that were not considered in the 2007 document. Details of the proposed action are described in the Revised Supplement (Reclamation 2010) and are not repeated in this FONSI.

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Based upon a review of the Revised Supplement, public comments on the Revised Supplement, and the 2007 EA, I have determined that the proposed action, including beaver dam breaching, placement of fill material, rotenone application, mechanical salvage, transport, holding, propagation, and stockings, will not significantly impact the human environment and that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not warranted. Consequently, it is my decision to authorize the proposed action identified in the Revised Supplement. This decision is predicated upon the following considerations.

1. No significant effects to federally-listed fishes will occur as a result of the proposed action. The possible effects to listed species resulting from the proposed action were addressed in a Biological Assessment prepared by Reclamation and submitted to the FWS in September 2010 (Reclamation and BLM 2010). The proposed action is expected to improve the conservation status of Gila chub, loach minnow, spokedace, desert pupfish, and Gila topminnow by removing nonnative fishes that could suppress or eliminate native populations in Bonita Creek. Expected mortality of native fishes resulting from future renovations would be counterbalanced by the long-term, beneficial effects of eradicating nonnative fishes in the stream. Proposed critical habitat for spokedace and loach minnow would not be significantly affected by the proposed action; consequently, no destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat is likely to occur. The terms and conditions of the reasonable and prudent measures enumerated in the biological opinion (FWS 2010) to reduce impacts to federally listed species will be incorporated into the project.
2. No significant effect to southwestern willow flycatcher (SWWF) will occur as a result of the proposed action. Prior to each chemical renovation, the habitat suitability for SWWF will be evaluated. If habitat appears suitable, SWWF surveys will be performed in accordance with FWS survey protocol. Renovation personnel would be required to minimize their activities near active SWWF territories within the treatment area.
3. The proposed action will be implemented in compliance with Section 402 provisions of the Clean Water Act (CWA) that regulate the use of a pesticide in waters of the United States. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has determined that the proposed placement of fill material qualifies for CWA Section 404 coverage under Nationwide Permit (NWP) No. 27. All terms and applicable 404 provisions (regional and general) associated with NWP No. 27 will be complied with during implementation of the action. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has issued a waiver of individual certification pursuant to CWA Section 401 for the action. The proposed action will comply with 401 general conditions that are part of NWP No. 27.
4. Other environmental effects of the proposed action will be similar to the effects considered in the 2007 EA and FONSI.

Documents related to this action are identified below.

FWS. 2010. Biological opinion for reinitiation of section 7 consultation for rotenone application and related native fish management action in Bonita Creek, Arizona. November 17, 2010.

Reclamation and BLM. 2010. Biological assessment: Effects of rotenone application and related native fish management actions to federally-listed fishes in Bonita Creek, Graham County, Arizona. September 2010.

Reclamation. 2010. Proposed reapplication of rotenone in Bonita Creek. Revised Supplement to the Environmental Assessment on Native Fish Restoration in Bonita Creek, Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, Graham County, Arizona. Phoenix Area Office, Phoenix, AZ.

Reclamation and BLM. 2007. Draft environmental assessment: Native fish restoration in Bonita Creek, Gila Box Riparian Conservation Area, Graham County, Arizona.

Reclamation. 2007. Finding of no significant impact. Native fish restoration in Bonita Creek. Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, Graham County, AZ. July 7, 2007.

BLM. 2007. Finding of no significant impacts/decision record (EA No. AZ410-2007-0001).