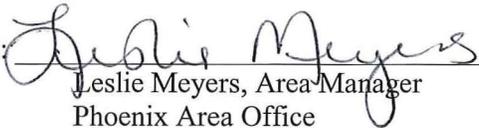


United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Lower Colorado Region
Phoenix Area Office

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BUBBLING PONDS FISH HATCHERY PIPE
RENOVATION, YAVAPAI COUNTY, ARIZONA

Approved:


Leslie Meyers, Area Manager
Phoenix Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation

Date:

10/2/18

FONSI No. PXAO-18-03

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public Law 91-90), Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR §§ 1500-1508), Department of the Interior NEPA regulations (43 CFR Part 46), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has issued a final Environmental Assessment (EA) to disclose the potential environmental impacts that would result from implementation of a proposed Bubbling Ponds Fish Hatchery (BPH) Pipe Renovation Project (Project). The final EA is incorporated by reference.

The proposed action includes Reclamation jointly funding the renovation of a pipe which conveys water from Bubbling Ponds Spring to the hatchery complex. The pipe is approximately 1,500 feet in length, originating from the diversion point ditch (from the spring) to an existing irrigation structure along the entrance to the hatchery on North Page Springs Road. The existing pipe is 30 inches in diameter, composed of corrugated metal, and buried at a depth of no more than 4 feet throughout its extent. The existing pipe would be sleeved with a 24-inch high-density polyethylene (HDP) pipe. If sections of the pipe cannot be sleeved, the top half section of the pipe will be exposed and opened for direct placement of the replacement pipe. The proposed action also includes stabilization of a hill slope above and below the pipe and replacement of a metal rack at one of the outtakes.

BACKGROUND

The Bubbling Ponds Fish Hatchery property was acquired in 1952 with facility construction in 1954 as a warm water hatchery. The facility was originally managed as a satellite production unit of the Page Springs Hatchery complex. Currently, BPH is operated by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD). Water is supplied to the hatchery from Bubbling Springs, a natural spring located about 0.5 miles north of the hatchery. The water travels from the spring through an open ditch, then moves through a pipe until it reaches the hatchery ponds. About 600 feet of the pipe is on private property, with the remainder on AGFD property. Four private owners have rights to the water, although only two use the water currently.

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) is a multi-stakeholder Federal and non-Federal partnership responding to the need to balance the use of the Lower Colorado River (LCR) water resources and the conservation of native species and their habitats in compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This is a long-term (50 year) plan to conserve at least 26 species along the LCR from Lake Mead to the Southerly International Boundary with Mexico through the implementation of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Razorback sucker (RASU) is listed by the AGFD as a species of special concern and was federally listed in 1991 as endangered under ESA. Reclamation is the implementing agency for the LCR MSCP and the AGFD is a signatory and committed partner to the program and the HCP.

This Project is a partnership between Reclamation and AGFD for the principle purpose of maintaining the RASU population in the lower Colorado River and associated drainages pursuant to goals set forth in the LCR MSCP. The LCR MSCP has funds available for maintenance, repair

and replacement of infrastructure used in production of native fish for the LCR. The LCR MSCP has entered into partnership with AGFD to provide rearing space at their facilities for native fish production.

Since the installation of the pipe for the hatchery many of the pipe line sections have become completely rusted through and fail to deliver water. Some of the buried supply line has been replaced within the hatchery facility, however, none of the pipeline supplying water to the hatchery from the spring have been replaced since the hatchery was acquired by the state. Since the spring supplies the only source of water to BPH and is used to rear native fish for the LCR MSCP, it is vital to keep this supply continuous, and of proper quality. Interruption to the spring source could cause suffocation of endangered fish, and potential take under the ESA.

AGFD has supplied RASU for Reclamation projects on the LCR since 1999 and has met or exceeded target goals almost every year since the partnership was formed.

MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS

The following issues were addressed in the EA and have been taken into consideration in Reclamation's determination of whether a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate, or an environmental impact statement should be prepared.

1. The Proposed Action will have no significant adverse or beneficial environmental impacts on the quality of the human environment including land use and recreation, cultural resources, and biological resources.
2. The Proposed Action will not result in any adverse effects to public health or safety.
3. The project area is not unique within its geographical setting, and is similar to many other areas of federal and private land in the region. There are no wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas, refuges, park lands, or other unique or rare characteristics of the land and aquatic environs that will be affected by the Proposed Action.
4. There are no known scientific or environmental controversies over the effects of the Proposed Action on the human environment.
5. There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain, or involve unique or unknown risks. Project activities will involve standard construction methods and conventional engineering technologies.
6. The Proposed Action will not establish a precedent for future actions.
7. Cumulative effects of the Proposed Action were considered in the EA. There are no known incremental effects of the action that become significant when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions that have affected, or will affect, the project area.

8. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect districts, sites, objects, or structures listed on, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), or cause loss of significant cultural resources. Two Class III Cultural resource surveys were completed within the Project area. These surveys examined the entire Project area footprint. The first was completed in 2014 when new land was added to the hatchery and reported in A Cultural Resources Survey of 31.5 Acres Prior to Land Acquisition by the Arizona Game and Fish Department near Cornville, Yavapai County Arizona. The second report was completed as part of the current pipe repair project that surveyed the private land involved. That report is entitled: Class III Cultural Resources Survey of 2.20 Acres for the Bubbling Ponds Fish Hatchery Pipe Rehabilitation Project in Cornville, Yavapai County, Arizona.

Neither report identified any eligible cultural resources within the Project area footprint. Based on the two surveys there are no known National Register eligible historic properties within the Project area. Consultation was initiated with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office and interested Native American Tribes on Reclamation's finding of No Historic Properties affected.

9. The Proposed Action is within the known range of the threatened northern Mexican gartersnake, and threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. Reclamation prepared a biological assessment that determined the proposed project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect the northern Mexican gartersnake due to potential localized mortality during construction. Although the proposed project is within yellow-billed cuckoo habitat, all work will take place outside nesting season. No other federally-listed species would be adversely impacted by the project. The biological assessment was submitted to USFWS on April 2, 2018 and a biological opinion was received August 30, 2018. The USFWS concluded that the proposed Bubbling Ponds project would not jeopardize the continued existence of the gartersnake. They concurred with Reclamation's finding of may affect, not likely to adversely affect finding for the yellow-billed cuckoo. No reasonable and prudent measures were included in the biological opinion's take statement beyond what Reclamation proposed as part of the proposed action. USFWS concurred with Reclamation's determination that the action would have no effect on proposed critical habitat for the gartersnake.
10. The Proposed Action will not violate any Federal, State, or local environmental laws or requirements.
11. The Proposed Action will not affect Indian trust assets.
12. The Proposed Action will not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007).
13. There will be no disproportionate high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations, as defined in Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon the attached Final EA, Reclamation has determined that the Bubbling Ponds Pipe Renovation Project will not significantly impact the human environment, and that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not warranted.

DOCUMENTS REFERENCED

- AGFD's Arizona Environmental Online Review Tool Report, dated April 3, 2017. Bateman, H. and T. Sprague. 2015. Northern Mexican gartersnake microhabitat and movement assessment at Bubbling Ponds Hatchery. May-December Progress Report to Arizona Game and Fish Department.
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- _____. 1997. Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project. Prepared for U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Project Office, Arizona.
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- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) 2018. Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC).
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