

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Restoration of Riparian Habitat at Dos Rios Ranch Phase I

FONSI 13-08-MP

Recommended by:

Douglas Kleinsmith

Douglas Kleinsmith
Natural Resource Specialist
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: 7/11/13

Concurred by:

D. Strait

Dan Strait
Program Manager, Central Valley
Project Conservation Program
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: 7/11/13

Approved by:

Anastasia Leigh

Anastasia Leigh
Regional Environmental Officer
Mid-Pacific Region

Date: 7/16/2013



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region

Background

In conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate and disclose any potential environmental impacts associated with providing \$575,456 from the Central Valley Project Conservation Program (CVPCP) to River Partners to restore and enhance riparian and wetland habitats and conduct avian monitoring on 198 acres of floodplain at Dos Rios Ranch (Ranch) to benefit endangered riparian wildlife. Restored habitats will provide a suitable reintroduction site for riparian brush rabbit as well as expanded habitat areas for riparian woodrat, least Bell's vireo, Valley elderberry longhorn beetle, three state-listed bird species, and five California Species of Concern.

The project is located at the confluence of the Tuolumne and San Joaquin Rivers, immediately adjacent to the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge.

The proposed action will supplement proposed funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) to restore habitat at the project site. Supplemental funding from WRP will be used to restore habitat on these same 198 acres (Phase I) as well as additional acreage which is Phase II. Reclamation is not funding restoration for the Phase II acres. NRCS prepared a Dos Rios Ranch WRP Conservation Plan for their restoration work for both Phases I and II. NRCS also signed a Compatible Use Authorization for Reclamation's portion of Phase I of the Dos Rios Ranch Restoration. The proposed action and the NRCS projects are fully integrated with each other, but they are not interdependent - each action could be implemented separately without the other action.

Reclamation helped fund the development of the Conceptual Conservation Plan and other pre-acquisition tasks for the Ranch in 2005. Reclamation helped fund the acquisition of the entire 1,603-acre Ranch in 2007.

Proposed Action

Reclamation will provide \$575,456 from the CVPCP to River Partners to restore and enhance riparian and wetland habitats and conduct avian monitoring on 198 acres of floodplain at the Ranch. This will supplement funds committed by NRCS for Phase 1.

River Partners will do site preparation, irrigation installation, planting native vegetation, and/or maintenance (irrigating and treating weeds for three seasons) at five fields at the Ranch. They will also construct, install irrigation, plant native vegetation, and conduct establishment maintenance on elevated rabbit refugia (mounds) at two of these fields. The mounds provide refuge for riparian brush rabbits during flooding of adjacent floodplain habitat.

River Partners biology staff will monitor the performance of project, including plant survival, weed pressure, and other parameters for a three-year establishment period. During years 1 to 3, the Point Reyes Bird Observatory will monitor songbirds at the Ranch and adjacent habitat in restored and remnant riparian areas.

Findings

Based on the attached EA, Reclamation finds that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The attached EA describes the existing environmental resources in the Proposed Action area and evaluates the effects of the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives on the resources. The EA was prepared in accordance with NEPA, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46). Effects on environmental resources were examined and found to be absent or minor. This analysis is provided in the attached EA, and the analysis in the EA is hereby incorporated by reference.

Following are the reasons why the impacts of the proposed action are not significant:

1. The proposed action will not adversely affect threatened or endangered species. On November 19, 2012, Reclamation requested the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to concur that the Dos Rios Ranch Restoration may affect but is not likely to affect the federally listed as threatened valley elderberry longhorn beetle or the endangered riparian brush rabbit. On April 25, 2013, FWS concurred with Reclamation's findings.
2. The proposed action has no potential to affect historic properties. The State Historic Preservation Officer responded to Reclamation's request for consultation in a letter of August 6, 2012 and concurred with the finding of no historic properties affected.
3. The proposed action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets.
4. The Proposed Action will not affect Indian sacred sites.
5. Implementing the proposed action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities.
6. The proposed action will not have significant cumulative impacts.
7. There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial.