

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Lower American River Salmonid Spawning Gravel Augmentation and Side-Channel Habitat Establishment Program – 2014 Nimbus Project

FONSI 14-01-BDO

Recommended by:


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Date: 8-1-2014


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Mid Pacific Region

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Background

In 2008, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Lower American River Salmonid Spawning Gravel Augmentation and Side-Channel Habitat Establishment Program (Program). Program work was permitted through 2013 for several locations, including the Proposed Action site, Nimbus Basin. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed on August 4, 2008. Reclamation began the gravel and channel habitat work in September 2008 and continued in 2009. In 2010, Reclamation completed a supplemental EA and signed a FONSI to modify its Proposed Action to meet the Program objectives by including the gravel acquisition site at Sailor Bar which was identified, and analyzed, as an alternative in the 2008 EA. In 2011, Reclamation completed a supplemental EA and signed a FONSI to incorporate woody material into other main channel features to improve Chinook salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. Under this supplemental EA, Reclamation will extend the duration of activities that were previously analyzed within the 2008 EA, 2010 and 2011 supplemental EA's under the Program and that were unable to be completed within the proposed schedule. Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would place gravel into the lower American River and create a side-channel along the south side of the lower American River at approximately River Mile 23. The Proposed Action area is located just downstream of Nimbus Dam on the lower American River and extends about 190 yards downstream.

Findings

The Bay-Delta Area Office of the Mid-Pacific Region of Reclamation has found that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required for carrying out the Proposed Action. The EA complies with the Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations and other requirements such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and local and State requirements.

Following are the resources in which additional information has been included in the Supplemental EA that further describes the Proposed Actions activities and how those activities would not impact those resources by implementation of the Proposed Action under the Program. The Proposed Action does not change the impact analysis or conclusions for any other resources previously analyzed under the Program.

1. **Hydrology:** The Proposed Action will not adversely impact the hydrology of the lower American River in the project area. All Proposed Action activities will incorporate permit recommendations and requirements from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Proposed Action has the potential to raise the water surface elevation up to 1.4 feet upstream of the proposed gravel placement. This would not adversely impact the hydrology of the lower American River.
2. **Fisheries:** The Proposed Action has the potential to impact the federally threatened Central Valley steelhead and its designated critical habitat. The in-water work window would be limited to August 1st through September 30th, before the spawning season and after the incubation period for steelhead. In addition, protective measures will be implemented to minimize effects to juvenile steelhead that could be present in the area year round. Reclamation has determined the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect Central Valley Steelhead or its designated critical habitat. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concurred with

Reclamation's determination on July 31, 2014. All protective measures included in the NMFS concurrence for the Proposed Action will be implemented during all activities. The placement of gravel and creation of side-channels would increase the amount of, and improve the existing, steelhead spawning and rearing habitat.

3. **Wildlife:** The Proposed Action has the potential to impact the federally threatened Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. The locations of haul roads, gravel storage sites, and side channel creation have been designed to avoid removing or trimming elderberry shrubs, the host plant for the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. All elderberry shrubs located within the Proposed Action area and within the surrounding area will not be impacted by the Proposed Action. Reclamation has determined the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) concurred with Reclamation's determination on July 11, 2014. All protective measures included in the FWS concurrence for the Proposed Action will be implemented during all activities.