

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Finding Of No Significant Impact

Dos Rios Ranch Riparian Brush Rabbit Recovery Project

FONSI 16-11-MP

Recommended by:

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Date:

6/21/16

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6/22/2016



1 Background

Reclamation will provide \$447,415 from the Central Valley Project Conservation Program (CVPCP) to River Partners to restore and enhance native habitat on 175 acres of historic riparian forest that are now degraded farmlands and remnant habitat, and create a riparian brush rabbit refuge mound within Dos Rios Ranch. Dos Rios Ranch is located at the confluence of the Tuolumne and San Joaquin Rivers, immediately adjacent to the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge (SJRNWR) in Stanislaus County. The Proposed Action will supplement proposed funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) to restore habitat at Dos Rios Ranch. The purpose of the CVPCP is to help mitigate the past impacts of Reclamation's Central Valley Project on threatened and endangered species, and minimize future impacts.

The environmental assessment (EA) was available for public review on May 23, 2016. The review period ended on June 6, 2016. No comments were received on the EA.

2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

2.1 No Action

Reclamation would not provide \$447,415 from the CVPCP to River Partners to restore and enhance native habitat on 175 acres of historic riparian forest in Fields 13 and 14 within Dos Rios Ranch and create a riparian brush rabbit refuge mound. River Partners would be required to obtain the \$447,415 from other public or private sources. If alternative funding cannot be secured, the Proposed Action could not move forward. Under provisions of the WRP, NRCS cannot pay the full cost for such critical project components as habitat plantings, installation of drip irrigation, and post-restoration performance monitoring. Also, WRP cannot pay for the construction of the flood refuge mounds or the planting of native vegetation on the mounds, a critical component to the recovery of the federally endangered riparian brush rabbit in the SJRNWR area.

2.2 Proposed Action

Reclamation will provide \$447,415 from the CVPCP to River Partners to restore and enhance 132.5 acres of floodplain and 1.5 acres of elevated RBR refuge mound, as well as enhance an

additional 41 acres of degraded remnant habitat along the margins of Fields 13 and 14 within Dos Rios Ranch. This would supplement funds committed by NRCS for the project.

CVPCP funding will provide for:

- sculpting of a 1.5 acre elevated refuge mound for RBR and other wildlife
- installation of drip irrigation, planting of native vegetation on the elevated mound, and habitat enhancement along field edges
- a portion of performance monitoring

NRCS WRP funding will provide for:

- site preparation and flood irrigation installation
- planting native vegetation on project fields excluding the elevated refuge mound
- site maintenance

The Proposed Action represents Phase 2 of the Dos Rios Ranch Habitat Restoration Project, Phase I of which was funded through Reclamation's Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Program starting in 2012.

3 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 EA describes the existing environmental resources in the area of the Proposed Action, and evaluates the effects of the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives on the resources of the Ranch. This EA was prepared in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46). Effects on several environmental resources were examined and found to be absent or minor. That 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 significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)).
2. The proposed action will not significantly impact natural resources and unique geographical characteristics such as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation, and refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order (EO) 11990); flood plains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3) and 43 CFR 46.215(b)).
3. The proposed action will not have possible effects on the human environment that are highly

uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).

4. The proposed action will neither establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).

5. There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).

6. The proposed action will not have significant cumulative impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).

7. The proposed action will not adversely affect any districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)). Pursuant to 54 USC § 306108, commonly known as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and its implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800, Reclamation notified the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) of a finding of no historic properties affected for the undertaking through correspondence dated October 15, 2015. Through correspondence dated November 20, 2015, the SHPO responded with no objection to Reclamation's finding.

8. The proposed action will not affect listed or proposed threatened or endangered species (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)). The Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with Reclamation's finding on March 3, 2016.

9. The proposed action will not violate federal, state, tribal or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).

10. The proposed action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993).

11. Implementing the proposed action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities (EO 12898).

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 and 512 DM 3).