


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
MID PACIFIC REGION
SACRAMENTO CA

August 2008

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Lower American River Salmonid
Spawning Gravel Augmentation
and Side-Channel Habitat
Establishment Program**

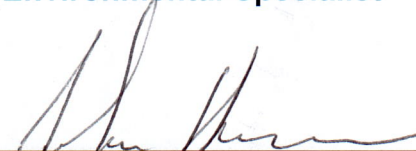
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Date:

8/4/08

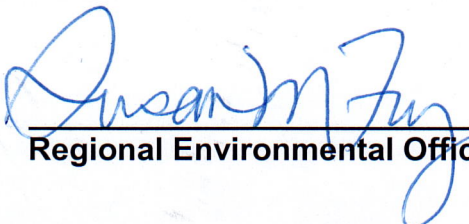
Recommended:


John Hannon
Program Manager

Date:

8-4-08

Approved:


Regional Environmental Officer

Date:

8-4-08

FONSI No.

08-09-MP

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared a final environmental assessment (EA) in August 2008 to evaluate the effects of adding spawning gravel to the lower American River at several locations and of establishing side-channel habitats.

The purpose of the action is to replenish spawning gravel at new restoration sites in the lower American River and to establish side-channel habitat to increase and improve Chinook salmon, and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. The need of the action derives from the declines of salmonid stocks due in part to loss of spawning habitat through curtailment of gravel recruitment due to blockage of the river channel by dams.

PROPOSED ACTION

Work will be conducted within reaches of the river from Nimbus Dam to Upper Sunrise Park (two miles) and from Jed Smith Bridge to Arden Rapids (250 yards). The actual gravel placement work will occur in a much smaller total reach of the river. The specific placement will cover up to seven sites (created riffles). The acres of streambed to be affected will be up to approximately 18.2 acres over the life of the project. Side-channel habitat will be created at three sites. Work will start in the summer of 2008 and continue yearly up to 5 years as funding allows through the permitted period.

FINDINGS

According to the National Environmental Policy Act and consistent with the EA, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of Reclamation has determined that the proposed action is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for carrying out the proposed action.

The following factors support this determination:

1. The proposed action will not significantly affect water quality. Turbidity downstream from the project site will be kept to a minimum during construction. Only a temporary increase in turbidity is expected, and if turbidity thresholds are exceeded, work will be suspended until they are within limits. Gravel will be washed and the wash water placed in settling basins. The water and sediment in the basins will be monitored for mercury and remedial actions will be taken if mercury is found in greater than background concentrations.

Equipment access, maintenance, refueling, parking and staging areas will be identified in consultation with the U. S. Corps of Engineers (COE), the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the Department of Fish and Game prior to project construction. Construction specifications will prohibit any equipment in or near the river which might affect water quality. Project construction will be regularly monitored to ensure

environmental compliance.

2. The proposed action will not affect threatened or endangered terrestrial species. The locations of haul roads, gravel storage sites, and side channels have been designed to avoid either removing or trimming any elderberry plants and associated valley elderberry longhorn beetles (VELB). Roads/gravel sites within 100 feet of any elderberry plants will be watered to avoid dust impacts to the associated VELB. A shrub within 100 feet of one the sections of roads to be constructed will be fenced and flagged prior to construction.

On May 8, 2008, Reclamation requested concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that the project is not likely to adversely affect the VELB. The Service concurred on June 30, 2008. No other sensitive species were found at the areas to be disturbed.

3. The proposed action will not adversely affect threatened or endangered fish. The placement of gravel will occur from July 1st to September 30th, before the spawning season and after the incubation period for steelhead trout and salmon. The temporary increase in turbidity will not affect fish. The placement of gravel and creation of side-channels would increase the amount of, and improve the existing, salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat.

On May 8, 2008, Reclamation requested concurrence from the National Marine Fisheries Service that the project is not likely to adversely affect the Central Valley steelhead and would not adversely affect spring-run or winter-run chinook salmon. NMFS concurred with this request on July 22, 2008.

4. The proposed action will not significantly affect other biological resources. Existing access roads will be used for most of the gravel hauling and staging routes. Stockpile sites will be on areas with little vegetation. Gravel acquisition areas will be restored. Areas where vegetation will be removed will be restored or mitigated for.

Reclamation will implement the terms, conditions, and provisions of permits from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

5. The proposed action will not significantly affect recreation. Work will be restricted to Monday through Friday when the recreation use is lowest and will exclude holidays. Public vehicular use of roads within the American river Parkway will only be prohibited for short periods of time during low use times of year. Boaters/rafters will be able to negotiate around equipment in the river.

6. Reclamation has concluded that the proposed action will have no adverse affect to historic properties resulting in no significant impacts to cultural resources. Reclamation will consult with the California State Historic Preservation Officer seeking their concurrence on the finding of no adverse affect. At such time Reclamation receives concurrence from the SHPO on its finding of no adverse affect, Reclamation will have

completed the Section 106 process. Reclamation will complete the Section 106 process as outlined in the regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 prior to implementation of the action.

In the event of an unanticipated discovery of unknown cultural resources during the project activities, work would be suspended in the area until the find can be assessed by a qualified archaeologist and implement avoidance, preservation, or recovery measures as appropriate prior to any work resuming at that specific location.

7. The proposed action will not significantly increase traffic. Gravel will be delivered over a period of about a month (22 working days), on week days between the hours of 9:00 am and 3:00 pm. Reclamation anticipates that delivery of gravel to any one site would not be done at the same time as delivery to another site.

8. The proposed action will not significantly increase traffic, noise, or air emissions.

9. The proposed action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets.

10. The proposed action will not disproportionately impact minority and disadvantaged populations or communities.