

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### CVPIA Gravel Replenishment Program Stanislaus River – River Mile 58

Recommended by:



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Date: 8/10/2017

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
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Mid Pacific Region

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## Background

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has been replenishing spawning gravel at existing restoration sites in the Lower Stanislaus River since 1997 to increase and improve Chinook salmon, steelhead, and rainbow trout spawning and rearing habitat. Reclamation prepared an environmental assessment (EA) in 1997 and supplemental EAs in 2000 and 2004 for this work in the Lower Stanislaus River. The 1997 EA was for gravel placed in 1997-1998. The 2000 supplemental EA was for gravel placed in 2000-2003. The 2004 EA covered gravel placed in 2004-2015. Table 1 shows past gravel placement amounts by year. The placements occurred each of these years during July to October. 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. This action will occur at River Mile (RM) 58, 0.2 mile below Goodwin Dam, as shown in Figure 1.

Table 1. Past Goodwin Canyon spawning gravel placement quantity by year.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Amount (tons)</b>
1997	2,000 (Goodwin Cable Crossing)
1998	3,000 (Goodwin Cable Crossing)
2000	1,300 (Goodwin Cable Crossing)
2001	500 (Goodwin Float Tube Pool)
2002	4,000 (Goodwin Cable Crossing)
2004	1,200 (Goodwin Float Tube Pool)
2005	2,500 (Goodwin Cable Crossing)
2006	2,500 (Goodwin Cable Crossing)
2011	5,000 (Goodwin Cable Crossing)
2012	3,000 (Goodwin Float Tube Pool)
2015	8,000 (Goodwin Cable Crossing)
<b>Total</b>	33,000



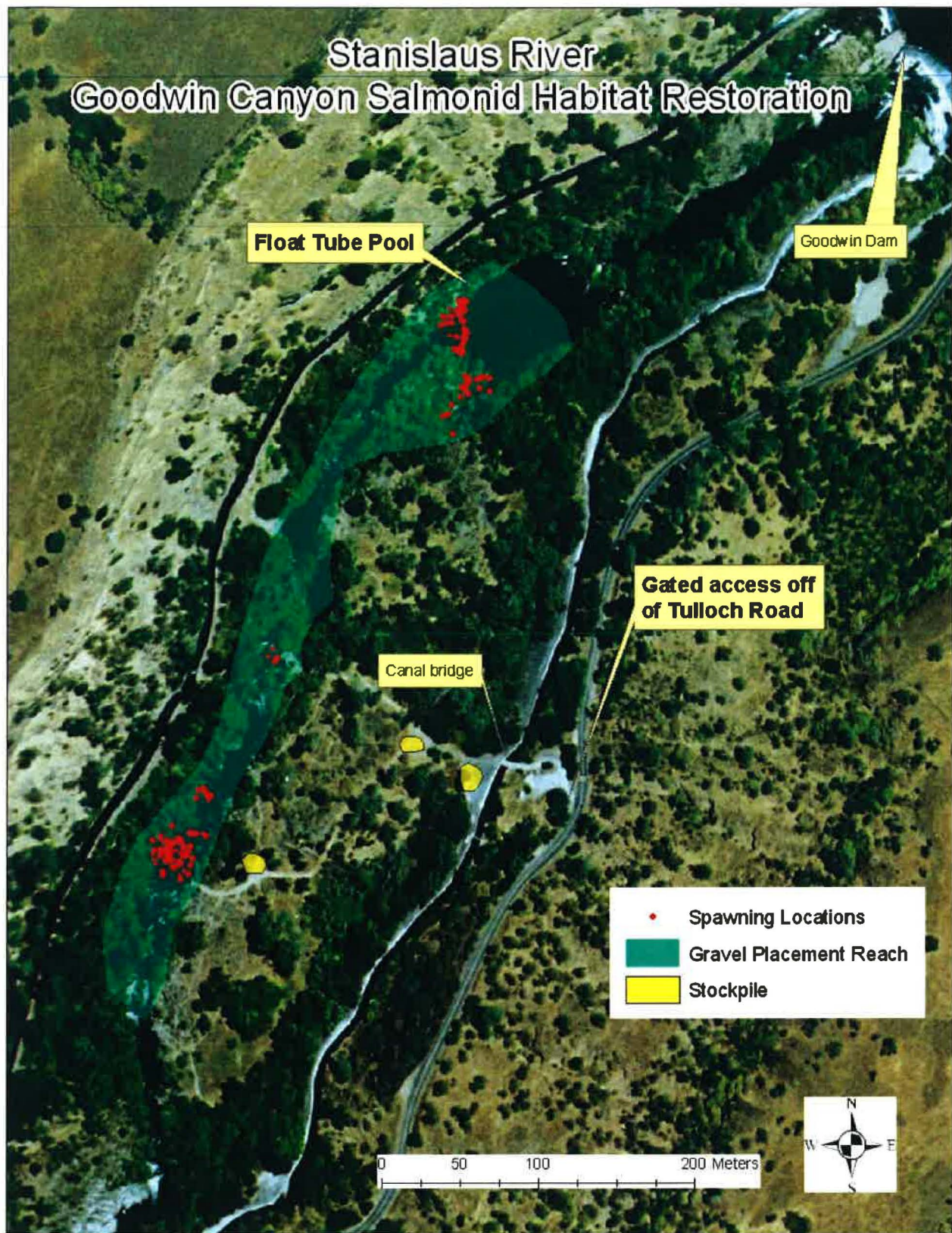


Figure 1. Stanislaus River at Goodwin Canyon spawning gravel placement reach map. Location of gravel stockpile areas and access roads are shown.

## Proposed Action

Spawning gravel will be added to the existing restoration sites annually as needed in the reach of the river at RM 58. Initially (in the first year) up to 14,000 tons of gravel will be added at these sites and distributed across the channel to create suitable spawning and rearing habitat conditions for steelhead and Chinook salmon. Gravel will be placed at depths ranging from one to seven feet deep. As gravel is distributed downstream by flows, additional gravel will be added in subsequent years. Gravel will be placed at intervals of one to a few years apart as the need is determined by ongoing monitoring of gravel conditions and fish use of the gravel. New gravel will be needed to replenish spawning gravel that washes downstream and is not replaced by upstream sources. The yearly flow regimes dictate how much gravel moves downstream. This restoration area provides the upstream-most spawning habitat for steelhead and Chinook salmon in the Stanislaus River. Maintenance of spawning habitat in this area is particularly important to successful over-summering of juvenile salmonids because the coolest water in the river during the warm summer months is available here. Cascades downstream from this reach prohibit access to this habitat from juvenile salmonids that were spawned in downstream reaches. The gravel placement will be in the same location as has occurred in the past and covers the same footprint that has been covered in the past. The stockpile locations are the same as those used in the past. The delivery and placement access routes are the same as in the past. The placement locations in the river are the same as in the past.

Gravel will be added using front end loaders in the downstream parts of the site accessible to equipment. Because access to the river for equipment is limited in the upstream part of the area, gravel will be added using a “habitat builder”, which is a gravel pump, or by another functionally equivalent method such as helicopter (a helicopter was used in 2000 and a habitat builder was used in subsequent years).

## Findings

The Bay-Delta 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 referenced EAs complied with the Council of 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, and met Reclamation’s public involvement requirements.

Reclamation prepared an EA on *Goodwin Canyon Gravel Addition Project Stanislaus River Phases I and II*; Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) 97-10-MP was signed July 28, 1997. Reclamation prepared a Supplemental EA for *Stanislaus River Salmonid Habitat Improvement 2000-2003 Goodwin Canyon Gravel Addition Project*; FONSI 00-07-MP was signed August 4, 2000. Reclamation also prepared the Supplemental EA for *CVPIA Gravel Replenishment*



*Program Stanislaus River at River Mile 58.2*; FONSI 04-03-MP was signed May 27, 2004. In 2011, Reclamation prepared a Finding of No New Significant Impact (FONNSI). These documents are incorporated by reference.

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The methodologies and locations of the Proposed Action are the same as the methods and gravel placement sites covered in the above referenced Environmental Assessment and Supplements. This action is a continuation of the gravel replacements in this reach, and is intended to maintain the habitat created by the initial action and naturally provide gravel sources to downstream river reaches. The impact descriptions in the two supplemental EAs also cover this action described above.

Following are the reasons why the impacts of the Proposed Action are not significant:

1. Equipment access, maintenance, refueling, parking and staging areas will be identified in consultation with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) personnel prior to project construction. Construction specifications will limit any equipment in or near the river which might affect water quality. In-river equipment will use biodegradable hydraulic fluid. Project construction will be regularly monitored by Department of Fish and Wildlife personnel to help insure environmental compliance. USACE regulatory officials have been consulted regarding placement of gravel into the river (Clean Water Act Section 404). It is anticipated that a new permit with the USACE will have similar conditions.
2. Turbidity downstream from the project site will be kept to a minimum during construction. Only a temporary increase in turbidity is expected. River flows at the time of construction will be low enough (200 to 700 cfs.) to allow disturbed fine sediment to settle out of the water column. Water quality permits (Clean Water Action Section 401) for the referenced projects in the supplemental EAs specify that turbidity during in-water work be limited to an increase of 15 NTU over background levels using appropriate averaging periods and that settleable matter not exceed 0.1 ml/l as measured 300 feet downstream from the working area. We anticipate that a supplemental permit for this project will be similar to protect water quality.
3. The project will not affect the valley elderberry longhorn beetle. Reclamation surveyed the site and found no elderberry bushes. If circumstances change and the project may affect the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, Reclamation will consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service.
4. The Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect the Central Valley steelhead or the essential fish habitat of fall-run Chinook salmon. The placement of gravel will occur during a two to three-week period from June 30 to September 15, before the spawning season and after the incubation period for steelhead trout and Chinook salmon. The National Marine Fisheries Service has concurred with this finding on May 16, 2016.
5. All appropriate permits and access agreements will be obtained prior to construction. USACE park officials have been consulted on all activities within park boundaries or involving

riparian vegetation. Oakdale Irrigation District officials have been consulted on all activities influencing their facilities.

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6. Trucks delivering gravel will temporarily increase noise levels, but levels will be within the levels of existing activities.
7. The Proposed Action has no potential to cause effects to historic properties. As the lead Federal agency for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Reclamation shall continue to evaluate and assess its responsibilities for Section 106 and effects to historic properties prior to future activities associated with the gravel augmentation program at River Mile 58.
8. The Proposed Action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets.
9. The Proposed Action will not disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations and communities.
10. The Proposed Action will not have significant cumulative impacts.
11. There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial.