BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Categorical Exclusion Checklist and Decision Record

Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People Lower Klamath River Mainstem Bathymetry and Sediment Characterization Project

CGB-ED-2026-007

prepared by BRIAN WRIGHT Digitally signed by BRIAN WRIGHT Date: 2026.01.07 12:49:43 -08'00'

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Torrey Tyler
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Alan Heck, Jr.
Area Manager
Klamath Basin Area Office

Proposed Action

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) would provide grant funding in the amount of $99,594.00 to the Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People (Tribe) for a multi-year study to conduct bathymetric and sediment characterization surveys (Project) on the mainstem Lower Klamath River in southwestern Del Norte County, California.

The purpose of the Project is to augment previous bathymetric and sediment characterization surveys conducted in 2023 (pre-dam removal) and 2024 (first year following completion of the dam removal process). Data collection equipment would include the use of acoustic doppler components, transducers, and other software mounted on a small boat which would traverse across the Project area creating bathymetric profiles and sediment characterization using side scan sonar.

This study will add two additional years of data collection (2026 and 2027) to continue documenting the extent of riverbed changes and downstream sediment redistribution following dam removal and provide the Tribe with a better scientific understanding of the changes that are occurring in the Lower Klamath River.

The project will use Thomas Gast and Associates Environmental Consultants (Contractor) to complete the 2026 and 2027 surveys. This Contractor conducted the 2023 and 2024 bathymetric and sediment characterization surveys and will follow the same protocols used in these prior year studies (see Gast et al. 2024) to allow direct comparisons between pre-dam removal and post-dam survey data across multiple years.

Location

The Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People Reservation is located near the upstream end of the Klamath estuary, within the transitional habitats of the river-estuary ecotone. The study area is situated entirely within the Yurok Tribal Reservation in southwestern Del Norte County, California (Attachment A).

The downstream, or westmost, boundary of the Project area is located at approximately Latitude 41.51722813°N, Longitude 124.03052800°W, and is located just upstream of the Historic Klamath River Bridge on U.S. Highway 101 South, while the upstream, or eastmost, of the Project area (adjacent to Klamath Glen, California) is located at approximately Latitude 41.511100312°N, Longitude 124.00113475°W. The surveys will cover approximately 2.42 river miles on the Lower Klamath River.

Background

The Tribe is experiencing increased impacts from a changing climate, including hotter and drier summers, more frequent droughts, and reduced stream flows during the summer and early fall

months. The Lower Klamath River Bathymetry Study and Sediment Characterization Project will assist the Tribe in developing, managing, enhancing, and protecting the fishery resources in the Lower Klamath River. This funding is contributing to the Tribe's continuing efforts to become more self-sufficient, sustainable, and resilient under this changing climactic regime.

With dam removal, sediments previously trapped behind the Lower Klamath River Dams will be released into the Klamath River. There are significant concerns that the low gradient, slow water velocities, and brackish conditions of the estuary may lead to dam sediments being deposited in the mainstem Lower Klamath River. Potential negative impacts could include deposition of aggradation (i.e., material deposited by a river, stream, or current) and increasing streambed elevation, which could result in additional flooding, restricted access to off-channel habitats, filling of pool habitats, and increased fines within the substrate composition matrix. Annual bathymetric and sediment characterization surveys will document the extent of river channel changes as the dam sediments redistribute downstream over time.

The proposed Project consists of three separate components:

- Bathymetry and Sediment Characterization Surveys:
    - The Contractor will conduct bathymetry studies and sediment characterization surveys to delineate substrate particle size and distribution within the Project area on the mainstem of the Lower Klamath River on the Yurok Tribe Reservation. The survey results will be compared to the data collected prior to the initiation of dam removal in 2023 and during the first-year post dam removal in 2024.

- Enhance Tribal Natural Resource Department Technical Capabilities:
    - This project component will enhance the capabilities of the Tribe's Natural Resources Department by providing training to two (2) Tribal staffer members (that possess Federal Aviation Administration drone certification licenses) on drone operation to collect geo-referenced imagery as well as provide guidance on data download procedures and data processing activities.

- Tribal Website Development and Updates:
    - The Contractor will provide additional website development and support in updating the Tribe's existing Natural Resource Department webpage and Geographic Information System data viewer. This website will support the Tribe's restoration planning efforts as well as provide the Tribal community access to historical and current data collected from the Tribe's ancestral territory and reservation. Additionally, the Contractor will facilitate future project updates and will solicit Tribal community feedback on restoration priorities.

Resources

Water Resources

Impacts to waters of the United States as well as other water resources within the Project area have been considered and are not expected to be adversely affected by implementation of the project. The proposed project would not involve any in-water work or construction activities, nor collection of any physical samples (e.g., water or sediment samples) within the Project area. Thus, there would be no Project area or downstream impacts from any surveying activities.

Biological Resources

Potential impacts on special status species, non-federally listed aquatic or terrestrial species, or their associated habitats have been evaluated. Due to the limited scope and nature of this Project, no in-water work or construction activities would occur, except for a small boat collecting crucial electronic data across the Project area. Additionally, no ground disturbing activities or collection of water or sediment samples would occur within the Project area, so no adverse impacts are expected.

Cultural Resources

Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 is demonstrated in the attached documentation (Attachment B), whereby, Reclamation California-Great Basin Archeologist, William Norton, determined that federal appropriations for the proposed Project is the type of undertaking that does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, should such properties be present, pursuant to the Title 54 U.S.C. § 306108, commonly known as Section 106 of the NHPA regulations codified at 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1). Therefore, Reclamation has no further compliance requirements under NHPA Section 106, pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1).

Indian Trust Assets

Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) are legal interests in property or rights held in trust by the United States for Indian Tribes or individuals. As depicted in Attachment A, the Project area is located entirely on the Yurok Tribe Reservation.

On January 7, 2026, Reclamation's Klamath Basin Area Office ITA Coordinator, Torrey Tyler, stated "Based on the nature and location of the planned work, it does not appear to be in an area that will impact Indian hunting or fishing resources or water rights. The Project area is located entirely on Indian lands; however, due to the nature and limited scope of this proposed Project (i.e., no ground disturbance or construction activities, no in water work, nor collection of

any physical samples (water or sediment)), it is reasonable to assume that the proposed action will not have any adverse impacts on ITAs."

Regulatory Compliance

The Tribe and the Contractor must comply with all regulatory compliance requirements and all applicable state, federal, and local environmental, cultural, and paleontological resource protection laws. These may include, but are not limited to, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Clean Water Act (CWA), and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Exclusion Category

516 DM 14.5 E.1 – (1*) Financial assistance, cooperative agreements, grants, loans, contracts, or other funding, where (a) the underlying action being funded would be covered by another Reclamation CE if Reclamation were implementing the action itself, or (b) the action is confined to areas already impacted by farming or development activities and the impacts are expected to be minor and localized.*

Extraordinary Circumstances

Below is documentation that Reclamation considered whether there were extraordinary circumstances associated with the proposed action. The criteria reflect the Extraordinary Circumstances detailed in 43 CFR 46.215 and Departmental and Reclamation policy on Indian Trust Assets (ITAs).

Extraordinary Circumstance	**Yes, No, or Uncertain**
(1) The proposed action would have significant impacts on public health or safety (43 CFR 46.215(a)).	No
(2) The proposed action would have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographical characteristics as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; flood plains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (43 CFR 46.215 (b)).	No
(3) The proposed action would have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks (43 CFR 46.215(c)).	No

Extraordinary Circumstance	Yes, No, or Uncertain
(4) The proposed action would establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (d)).	No
(5) The proposed action would have a direct relationship to other actions that implicate potentially significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (e)).	No
(6) The proposed action would have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by Reclamation (LND 02-01) (43 CFR 46.215 (f)).	No
(7) The proposed action would have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species (43 CFR 46.215 (g)).	No
(8) The proposed action would significantly 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 (43 CFR 46.215 (h), and 512 DM 3)).	No
(9) The proposed action would contribute to potentially significant effects resulting from the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act, and 43 CFR 46.215 (i)).	No
(10) The proposed action would affect ITAs (512 DM 2 and Reclamation Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993).	No

NEPA Action Recommended

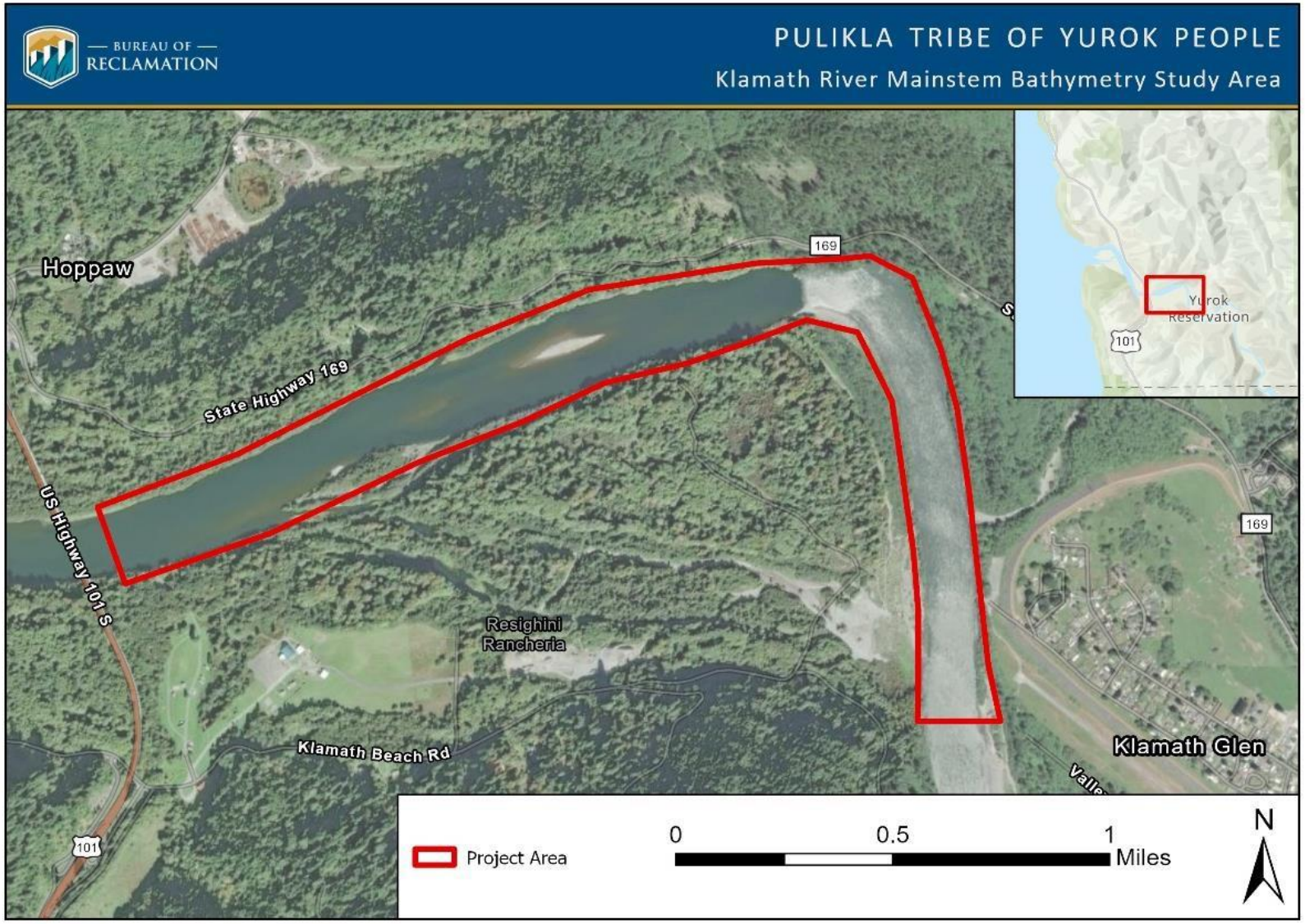
The proposed project is covered by a categorical exclusion and no extraordinary circumstances exist. The proposed action is excluded from further documentation through the preparation of an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. The proposed project as described above complies with the Endangered Species Act (ESA; 16 USC § 1531 et seq.), Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA; 16 USC § 703-712), and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA; Title 54 USC § 306108), commonly known as Section 106).

The proposed project requires no environmental commitments because no physical samples (e.g., water or sediment) will be collected during this project. Additionally, as proposed, there will be no ground disturbing or construction-related activities nor in-water work associated with this project.

References

Gast, T., J. Petreshen, and M. Kaye. 2024. Mainstem Klamath Bathymetry Field and Analysis Report 2024. 16 pages. Website: www.tgaec.com.

Attachment A: Overview Map of Project Area



Attachment B: Cultural Resources Compliance

CULTURAL RESOURCES COMPLIANCE
Division of Environmental Affairs
Cultural Resources Branch (CGB-153)

CGB-153 Tracking Number: 26-KBAO-005

Project Name: Mainstem Klamath River Bathymetry Field and Analysis Project, Humboldt County, California.

NEPA Contact: Brian R. Wright, Senior Natural Resource Specialist

CGB-153 Cultural Resources Reviewer: William Norton, Archaeologist

WILLIAM NORTON Digitally signed by WILLIAM NORTON Date: 2025.10.15 17:29:09 -07'00'

Date: October 15, 2025

Reclamation proposes authorizing bathymetric survey for the subject project. This is the type of undertaking that does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, should such properties be present, pursuant to the Title 54 U.S.C. § 306108, commonly known as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) regulations codified at 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1). Reclamation has no further obligations under NHPA Section 106, pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1).

The Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People have retained contractor Thomas Gast and Associates Environmental Consultants to perform bathymetry field analysis. The project is a continuation of previous bathymetric survey with the last one being conducted and completed in 2024 (pre-dam removal) and will allow for a comparison between pre-dam removal and post-dam removal to compare how the river bed is changing by utilizing the same methodologies, sampling locations, and the same contractor, as well as the same boat/equipment/gear setup covering the remainder of 2025 and continuing into 2026.

If approved, this project would not result in any ground disturbance, modifications to facilities, or change in land use.

This document is intended to convey the completion of the NHPA Section 106 process for this undertaking. As defined, this action would not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by Reclamation (LND 02-01) (43 CFR 46.215 (g). Please retain a copy in the administrative record for this action. Should changes be made to this project, additional NHPA Section 106 review, possibly including consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), may be necessary. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.

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Attachment C: Indian Trust Assets Compliance

