

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Draft Finding Of No Significant Impact

MIDDLE ROSEWOOD CREEK RESTORATION IMPLEMENTATION AREA A

Recommended:

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
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Background

Rosewood Creek is a branch of Third Creek, located in the Lake Tahoe Basin within Incline Village, Washoe County, Nevada. The watershed of Third and Rosewood Creeks has been modified from its natural state since the late 1800s by intensive logging, livestock grazing, mining, fire exclusion, and urban development. In addition to increased erosion and sedimentation, these activities have degraded the riparian, wetland, and fish habitats. Modern development, in particular the construction of roadways and culverts across creeks and changes to hydrology, have modified the creek beds, banks, flows, and sediment loads in such a manner that has resulted in streambed incision, a disconnected floodplain, and drying of stream environment zones, riparian areas and wetland resources.

Purpose and Need

The purposes of the proposed project, listed in priority order (high to low) are:

- Improve Stream Water Quality
- Protection from Flooding
- Improve Forest Health/Wildlife Habitat
- Enhance Aquatic Habitat
- Improve Fish Passage
- Pre-Treat Urban Stormwater
- Improve Fish Access

The primary need for restoration of the project area is to address its substantial source of sediment to Lake Tahoe as a result of channel erosion prompted by historic and continuing watershed and site-specific effects on hydrology and sediment loads due to human activities. Rosewood Creek has been the focus of several studies over the years aimed at identifying, prioritizing and correcting sources of pollution, particularly degraded Stream Environment Zone (SEZ) conditions and processes that negatively affect surface and groundwater quality contributing to Lake Tahoe. Functioning SEZs have been found to be very effective in removing nutrients and sediments. Additional benefits of maintaining, restoring, and protecting SEZs are their ability to reduce flood peaks, diffuse flow, increase evapotranspiration, and increase the retention time of surface water.

Proposed Action

The primary features of the Preferred Alternative are to:

- relocate the stream channel within the SEZ to incorporate former channel remnants and provide a stream length and profile that is suitable for the existing valley topography.
- replace the enlarged and incised channel with a geomorphically sized low-flow channel excavated within the existing surrounding floodplain;
- modify the topography of the active floodplain adjacent to the relocated channel to accommodate overbank flows;
- backfill the existing degraded channel to reconnect the topography with adjacent surfaces and restore wetland/SEZ conditions;
- install buried grade controls at strategic locations along the new channel and across the entire floodplain to prevent re-capture of the backfilled existing channel and avoid future incision of the new channel;
- install a new culvert of appropriate size and orientation under Northwood Boulevard to improve the stream profile, connect to the reactivated floodplain and improve fish passage; and,
- remove existing fill material from within the SEZ upstream of Northwood Boulevard and restore functioning active floodplain/wetland.

Findings

Reclamation prepared a final Environment Assessment (EA) in August 2010 which analyzed the impacts of the project. Based on the EA, the Mid-Pacific Region of Reclamation has found 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 EA complies with the Council of Environmental Quality's NEPA Regulations and other requirements such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and local and State requirements (see below). It meets Reclamation's public involvement requirements.

Following are the reasons why the impacts of the proposed action are not significant:

1. Geology and Soils – The project will not significantly affect geology and soil resources. During construction, temporary Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be installed and

maintained to protect disturbed surface soils from erosion that could affect the water quality of Rosewood Creek and Lake Tahoe.

The Preferred Alternative will create long term benefits in terms of reduced erosion and sedimentation.

2. Wetlands and Stream Environment Zone – The project will not significantly affect wetlands and SEZ. The Preferred Alternative will result in temporary and permanent disturbance to uplands, SEZ, jurisdictional wetlands and waters of the United States. (0.075 acres of Riparian/SEZ (including 0.012 acres of jurisdictional wetlands) and 0.29 acres of upland, for a total of 0.37 acres.). The Preferred Alternative will result in a long-term beneficial change in surface and groundwater support for wetland/riparian/SEZ conditions, improving the long-term function and quality of 5.32 acres of the Riparian/SEZ habitat within the project site.

Temporary BMPs will be installed and maintained during construction to protect existing wetlands, SEZ, and the water quality of Rosewood Creek. Specific protective measures will be installed (e.g., fencing/berming) around regulated resources such as wetlands, waters of the U.S., and SEZ.

3. Floodplains - The project will not significantly affect floodplains. The area of 100-year floodplain will still remain within the existing SEZ boundary. No existing or proposed structures or infrastructure are modeled to be adversely affected during the 100-year event by the changes in floodplain inundation.

4. Water Quality - The project will not significantly affect water quality. The Preferred Alternative may cause temporary adverse water quality changes during construction and until revegetation is fully established. During construction, temporary BMPs will be installed and maintained to protect the water quality of Rosewood Creek, Third Creek, and Lake Tahoe. The Preferred Alternative will result in long-term beneficial water quality changes by decreasing channel bed and bank erosion within the Project Site. These measures will reduce sediment released downstream to Rosewood Creek, Third Creek and Lake Tahoe.

5. Biological Resources – Vegetation - The project will not significantly affect vegetation. The Preferred Alternative will remove a total of 32 conifer trees and will also remove riparian vegetation, ranging from understory shrubs to decadent tree-form willow and alder specimens. Vegetation will be salvaged where possible. After project completion, improved soil moisture conditions will restore opportunities for native wetland and riparian plant species to become reestablished and increase in occurrence and/or vigor.

6. Biological Resources – Wildlife and Fish - The project will not significantly affect wildlife. Construction activities associated with the Preferred Alternative will temporarily affect foraging habitats of most wildlife species. Construction will avoid destruction or disturbance to any nests for migratory birds. The final plans and specifications will incorporate a fish rescue plan to be conducted prior to flow diversion(s). Long-term effects of the Preferred Alternative would be neutral for terrestrial wildlife and beneficial for aquatic wildlife.

7. Threatened and Endangered Species - The project will not affect threatened or endangered species. No listed, proposed, or candidate species occur in the subject project area.

8. Cultural Resources - The project will not affect historic properties. On September 18, 2007 the State of Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with Reclamation's determination that no historic properties were found within the area of potential effects for Implementation Area A. In addition, the SHPO concurred with Reclamation's determination that the proposed undertaking will not pose an effect to any historic properties.

9. Indian Trust Assets - The Project will not affect Indian Trust Assets (ITAs). The nearest known ITA is approximately 12 miles southeast of the proposed project.

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

11. Controversy - There is no potential for the effects to be considered highly controversial.