

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southwest Region
501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200
Long Beach, California 90802-4213

APR 19 2010

In response refer to: 15-2110
2010/01365



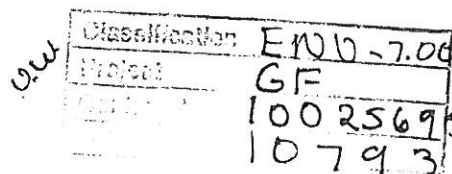
Mr. James De Staso III
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Northern California Area Office
16349 Shasta Dam Boulevard
Shasta Lake, California 96019-8400

Dear Mr. De Staso:

This letter is in response to your letter of March 18, 2010, requesting NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concurrence that the proposed multi-year Central Valley Project Improvement Act Spawning Gravel Restoration Program on the Sacramento River near Redding, California, may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, Federally listed endangered winter-run Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), threatened spring-run Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*), threatened Central Valley steelhead (*O. mykiss*), threatened Southern Distinct Population Segment of North American green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*), or any of their respective designated critical habitats.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) plans on placing clean spawning gravel annually into the Sacramento River at either the Keswick Dam site or Salt Creek site between August and September, 2011 to 2015. The objective of the proposed project is to restore salmonid spawning habitat lost as a result of the construction of Shasta Dam. Spawning gravel has been added annually to the Keswick Dam and/or Salt Creek sites seventeen times since 1997. NMFS has consulted with Reclamation on this project since 1997 resulting in concurrence that the project is not likely to adversely affect Federally listed anadromous fish species. An annual average of 6,264 tons have been placed at the Keswick site, while an annual average of 12,650 tons have been placed at the Salt Creek site since 1997. Past injections have been successfully mobilized by high river flows and subsequently deposited downstream to form active spawning riffles. Past monitoring has shown that gravel augmentation has been transported downstream and utilized for spawning by winter-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead.

Injections at the Keswick Dam and Salt Creek sites would likely alternate annually beginning with Salt Creek in 2011. From the Keswick Dam injection site, gravel will be dumped from a 100-foot-high cliff. Gravel will only encroach into the wetted river channel approximately 25 feet, with the vast majority being retained above the water surface. The amount of gravel injected at this site will not exceed 10,000 tons annually. From the Salt Creek injection site, gravel will be placed onto the river bank and slowly pushed into the river using a rubber-tired front-end loader to form an approximate 250-foot-long raised gravel delta extending about half



way across the wetted channel. The amount of gravel at this site will not exceed 30,000 tons annually. At both sites injected gravel will remain in place until mobilized by high winter flows. Gravel will be collected from deposits that are outside active stream channels which would not have naturally contributed to the river and will be of a size and shape considered to be optimal for successful salmonid spawning.

The following measures designed to minimize adverse impacts to the riverine ecosystem have been incorporated into the proposed project work plan:

1. The August to September time frame was selected in coordination with NMFS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game as the period of lowest potential impacts to salmonids. It allows the addition of materials at the tail end of winter-run fry emergence and the beginning of fall-run adult spawning in the area.
2. The project location is in an area of the Sacramento River that has a bedrock streambed, therefore no redds would be present or impacted.
3. The spawning gravel will be washed at least once and have a cleanliness value of 85 or higher, based on Caltrans Test #227, to minimize the introduction of fine sediments into the river. Gravel will also be completely free of oils, clay, debris, and organic material.
4. Gravel used in this project will be uncrushed, rounded "natural river rock" with no sharp edges. Gravel will have the following size requirements: 95-100 percent passing through a 5-inch sieve; 75-85 percent passing through a 2-inch sieve; 40-50 percent passing through a 1-inch sieve; 25-35 percent passing through a ¾-inch sieve; 10-20 percent passing through a ½-inch sieve; and 0-5 percent passing through a ¼-inch sieve.

ESA Section 7 Consultation

Based on our review of the proposed project and the best scientific and commercial information currently available, and provided that the above-listed conservation measures are strictly adhered to, NMFS concurs with your determination that the proposed multi-year Central Valley Project Improvement Act Spawning Gravel Restoration Program may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, listed anadromous fish or any of their designated critical habitat. The potential for adverse effects is discountable and not expected to reach the level where take will occur for the following reasons: (1) the time frame avoids juvenile Chinook and steelhead incubation and emergence as well as the sturgeon spring spawning period; (2) the use of in-river flows rather than heavy equipment to slowly distribute gravels downstream thereby allowing juveniles and adults sufficient opportunity to avoid any disturbance around the injection site; (3) the use of washed gravel to avoid turbidity and sediments entering the river; and (4) the use of rounded river rock of the size preferred by spawning salmonids. Designated critical habitat in the action area, including the riparian areas along the bank, would not be adversely effected since the same injection site as previous years is being used (*i.e.*, the project site is devoid of any vegetation at the end of the road).

This concludes informal consultation for the proposed project. Reinitiation of consultation is required where discretionary Federal agency involvement or control over the action has been retained (or is authorized by law) and if: (1) new information reveals effects of the action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not previously considered; (2) the action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to the listed species or critical habitat not considered; or (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the action.

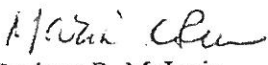
Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Consultation (FWCA)

The action area has been identified as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for all races of Central Valley Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) including the fall/late fall-run in Amendment 14 of the Pacific Salmon Fishery Management Plan pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). Federal action agencies are mandated by the MSA (Section 305[b][2]) to consult with NMFS on all actions that may adversely affect EFH, and NMFS must provide EFH conservation recommendations back to those agencies (Section 305[b][4][A]). Because the proposed action includes conservation measures designed to avoid impacts to salmonid habitat, and is in fact designed to enhance and increase spawning habitat in the Sacramento River, NMFS concurs with Reclamation that the proposed action will not adversely affect EFH. Therefore, additional EFH Conservation Recommendations are not being provided at this time; however, if there are substantial revisions to the proposed action, the lead Federal agency will need to reinitiate EFH consultation.

The purpose of the FWCA is to ensure that wildlife conservation receives equal consideration, and is coordinated with other aspects of water resources development [16 U.S.C. 661]. The FWCA establishes a consultation requirement for Federal departments and agencies that undertake any action that proposes to modify any stream or other body of water for any purpose, including navigation and drainage (16 U.S.C. 662(a)). Consistent with this consultation requirement, NMFS provides recommendations and comments to Federal action agencies for the purpose of conserving fish and wildlife resources. The FWCA provides the opportunity to offer recommendations for the conservation of species and habitats beyond those currently managed under the ESA and MSA. Because the proposed project is designed to minimize impacts to aquatic habitats and to improve spawning habitat conditions for aquatic species, NMFS has no additional FWCA comments to provide.

Please contact Ms. Naseem Alston at (916) 930-3655, or via e-mail at naseem.alston@noaa.gov, if you have any questions concerning this correspondence or require additional information.

Sincerely,


Rodney R. McInnis
Regional Administrator

cc: Copy to file - AR# 151422SWR2006SA00076

NMFS-PRD, Long Beach, CA

Mr. Jim Smith, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 10950 Tyler Road, Red Bluff, CA 96080

Ms. Tricia Bratcher, California Department of Fish and Game, 601 Locust St., Redding, CA
96001