

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Supplemental Finding of No Significant Impact

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

Recommended: *Douglas Olsen-Smith* Date: 8/19/11
Environmental Specialist

Recommended: *John Hannon* Date: 9-4-2011
Program Manager

Approved: *Susan M. Fry* Date: 9-5-2011
Area Manager

FONSI No. 11-11-MP



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Bay-Delta Area Office
Sacramento, California

Background

In 2008, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for its Lower American River Salmonid Spawning Gravel Augmentation and Side Channel Habitat Establishment Program (Program). The Finding of No Significant Impact was signed on August 8, 2008. Reclamation began the gravel and channel habitat work in September 2008 and continued in 2009. In 2010, Reclamation completed a supplemental EA and signed a FONSI to modify its proposed action to meet the Program objectives by including the gravel acquisition site at Sailor Bar which is identified, and analyzed, as an alternative in the 2008 EA; to alter the gravel transportation route to the upper Sunrise gravel augmentation site; to alter hauling routes within Sailor Bar; and to alter the capacity of trucks delivering gravel to Sailor Bar. Also, the supplemental EA recognized that work in any one year could be completed in a shorter time than assumed in the 2008 EA.

Reclamation now plans to incorporate woody material into some or all of the main channel sites identified in the 2008 EA for gravel augmentation to improve Chinook salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. Woody material is a natural part of healthy rivers and provides important habitat for aquatic species, including cover from high flows and predators, collection of suitable spawning materials, and a food source for aquatic insects. It can create and maintain beneficial habitat features such as pools, islands, and gravel bars.

Findings

Reclamation prepared a supplemental EA on the modifications in August 2011 which is incorporated by reference. The Bay-Delta Area Office of the Mid-Pacific Region of Reclamation has found that the modification to 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 modification to the proposed action. The EA complies 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. It meets Reclamation's public involvement requirements.

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

1. The modifications will not significantly impact hydrology because the woody material would not be large enough to alter overall hydrology of the river cross section at the sites and not significant enough to incorporate into the hydrologic modeling of the design.
2. The modifications will not adversely affect fish. The addition of woody material will be limited to July 1 to September 30, 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. National Marine Fisheries Service has concurred that the addition of woody material would not adversely impact listed fish.
3. The modifications will not affect public safety because:
 - The velocities at the designed site are relatively low (less than about four feet per second)

during flows below 5,000 cfs when the majority of recreational activities occur on the water making for minimal hazard to people.

- The site is designed so the flow would not be concentrated along the shallow north bank and island where the woody material would be placed.
 - A deeper channel was created on the south side of the river to funnel the majority of the flow (and boaters) through the site, making an easy route for boaters.
 - While there is recreational boating use in this area, the most intense boating activity is downriver of the current project sites.
 - The island and shallow area surrounding the island would create conditions that would discourage boaters from making use of this area.
 - The natural wood material would be angled diagonally down river to reduce the chances of hazardous contact with swimmers, boaters, anglers, and material.
 - If any woody material that Reclamation places in the river is washed downstream and, in the judgment of the Sacramento Department of County Parks, becomes a safety hazard, Reclamation would pay existing County contractors to have it removed.
 - The American River is a wild river with all the hazards inherent to flowing cold water. There is recognition that no project can be built to be completely hazard free, particularly during higher flows, and personal responsibility is involved when recreating in and around the river.
4. Reclamation will incorporate permit recommendations and requirements from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Regional Water Quality Control Board
 5. The modification does not change the impact analysis or conclusions in the original FONSI for any other resources.