

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Provo Area Office
Provo, Utah

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Arthur V. Watkins Dam Crest Raise
Willard Reservoir Project

Recommended by:


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4/27/15
Date

Concur:

ES 
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27 APR 2015
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Introduction

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Provo Area Office has conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a proposal to raise A.V. Watkins Dam to increase the storage capacity of the reservoir. The Bureau of Reclamation is responsible for managing A.V. Watkins Dam, and is the lead agency for the purposes of compliance with the NEPA for this proposed action.

The EA was prepared by Reclamation to address the following:

- A.V. Watkins Dam does not have the needed storage capacity to fully utilize the existing Weber Basin Project water rights.
- Reclamation has a contractual obligation to continue water deliveries for irrigation and M&I uses. Such deliveries are dependent upon sufficient water storage capacity at A.V. Watkins Dam.
- Recreational benefits associated with Willard Reservoir and Park should be protected and enhanced if possible.

Alternatives

The EA analyzed the No-Action Alternative and the proposed Action Alternative of raising the dam to increase the active storage capacity from 202,000 acre-feet (af) to 222,000 af, and would include two components: (1) raising the maximum reservoir water surface and dam crest by 2 feet, from elevation 4,226 feet to 4,228 feet; and (2) modifying the existing State Park features to accommodate the increased maximum reservoir water level. The Proposed Action would provide an additional 20,000 af of water to meet future demands and is the preferred alternative. Reclamation's decision is to implement the Proposed Action Alternative. Mitigation measures (environmental commitments) that are integral to the alternative are in Chapter 4 of the Final EA.

Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon a review of the EA and supporting documents, Reclamation has determined that implementing the proposal will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively, with other actions in the area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for this proposed action. This finding is based on consideration of the context and intensity as summarized here from the EA.

Context

The affected locality is the Weber Basin Project service area of the natural drainage basin of the Weber River, including the basin of the Ogden River, which includes Davis, Morgan, Summit, and Weber Counties.

The Weber Basin Water Conservancy District (District) operates A.V. Watkins Dam. The Weber Basin Project makes up a large portion of the water supply delivered by the District. The District water under contract totals 226,000 af, which consists of roughly 136,000 af for irrigation and 90,000 af for M&I use. This water is delivered to lands along the upper Weber and Ogden River Valleys, as well as the eastern slopes and lower valley lands of Weber and Davis Counties. The District operates, either solely or jointly, seven reservoirs which store approximately 384,000 af of the Weber Basin Project's water.

The project involves 125.5 acres of disturbance of Reclamation administered land, that by itself does not have national, regional, or state-wide importance. Of the 125.5 acres of disturbance, all but 10.9 acres were previously disturbed during construction activities.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 significance criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27. These criteria were incorporated into the resource analysis and issues considered in the EA.

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The proposed action would impact resources as described in the EA. Mitigating measures (environmental commitments) to reduce impacts to State Parks, recreation, water resources, visual resources, socioeconomics, cultural resources, and wildlife resources were incorporated into the design of the proposed action alternative. The following resources will have short-term effects of the proposed action; recreation; water quality; public safety, access, and transportation; visual resources; socioeconomics; wetlands and vegetation; wildlife resources; and threatened, endangered, candidate, and state sensitive species. Long-term predicted effects are water resources. Adverse and beneficial effects include increase reservoir yield and during initial filling a decrease in river flow during drier years.

None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety or a minority or low-income population.** The proposal will have no significant impacts on public health or safety. No minority or low income community would be disproportionately affected by the proposed action. The reason for this is that the proposed project would not involve

major facility construction, population relocation, health hazards, hazardous waste, property takings, or substantial economic impacts.

3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area.** There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas that would be affected by the proposal.
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** Reclamation contacted representatives of other Federal agencies, state and local governments, Indian Tribes, public and private organizations, and individuals regarding the proposal and its effects on resources. Based on the responses received, the effects on the proposal on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** Some degree of uncertainty is expected due to the complexity of water operations involving 7 large reservoirs and the complexity of varying hydrologic years, and the complexity of predicting water needs for growing populations. All of these factors were considered and analyzed in the EA. When uncertainty about impacts to the human environment was identified in the EA, mitigation measures (environmental commitments) and monitoring measures were identified and included in the Proposed Action. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered highly uncertain or that involve unique or unknown risks.
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The action is not precedent setting on an action with significant effects. No significant effects were identified and any proposal to raise a dam to increase storage would require an EA.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions which are individually insignificant but cumulatively significant.** Cumulative impacts are possible when the effects of the proposed action are added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, as described under related NEPA Documents above; however, significant cumulative effects are not predicted, as described in the EA.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect sites, districts, buildings, structures, and objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.** The State Historic Preservation Officer and the Tribal Chairmen have concurred with a determination of no historic properties affected by the proposal. In order to meet this determination, the Utah State Historic Preservation Officer

has stipulated that qualified archaeological monitors be present at all earth disturbing activities for this project.

9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** None of the listed species have been documented in the project area. In addition, there is either insufficient or no habitat to support the life history requirements of each of the listed species. There is also no critical habitat in the project area. Due to this rationale, Reclamation's finding is no effect to listed species.

10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment.** The project does not violate any Federal, state, local, or Tribal law, regulation, or policy imposed for the protection of the environment. In addition, this project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, letters were sent to two Indian tribes asking whether they wished to consult on the project. Follow up phone calls were made to the tribes, and it was concluded that they had no interest in this project.