



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Lodi Fish and Wildlife Office

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November 27, 2017

Memorandum

To: Water and Fisheries ARD, Pacific Southwest Region
Sacramento, CA

From: CVPIA Implementation Branch Chief, Pacific Southwest Region
Sacramento, CA

Subject: Finding of No Significant Impact for Hallwood Floodplain and Side Channel Restoration
Project, Yuba River, Yuba County, California

This memorandum transmits a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for your review and signature, if approved. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepared the attached Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA/IS) for the purpose of evaluating alternatives associated with granting funds, under the authority of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act's Anadromous Fish Restoration Program (AFRP), to implement a floodplain and side channel restoration project to improve salmonid rearing habitat in the Yuba River, Yuba County, California. The proposal is consistent with recommendations for the Yuba River in the Final Restoration Plan of the AFRP. The EA examines and evaluates effects of the proposed action on the environment and concludes that the action does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Attachments:

Finding of No Significant Impact

Notification of Section 106 Compliance

Executed Memorandum of Understanding with the State Historic Preservation Officer

USFWS Biological Opinion

USFWS Biological Opinion – Reinitiation of Consultation

National Marine Fishery Service Biological Opinion

Environmental Assessment/Initial Study

Finding of No Significant Impact

Hallwood Floodplain and Side Channel Restoration Project, Yuba River, Yuba County, California

Lead Federal Agency:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2605
Sacramento, California 95825

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to grant funds, under the authority of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act's (CVPIA) Anadromous Fish Restoration Program (AFRP), to cbec ecoengineering to implement a salmonid floodplain enhancement project on the Yuba River. The floodplain and side channel enhancement project would provide improved rearing habitat for naturally reproducing anadromous salmonids on the Yuba River. The Proposed Project would enhance/create approximately 165 acres of improved seasonally inundated riparian floodplain habitats, 2 miles of perennial side channels, and more than 6 miles of seasonal side channels, alcoves and swales on private property adjacent to the Yuba River.

Documents reviewed in the preparation of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) include:

- CVPIA PEIS
- AFRP Final Restoration Plan
- Hallwood Floodplain and Side Channel Restoration Project Final Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA/IS)
- Notification of Section 106 Compliance
- USFWS Biological Opinion
- National Marine Fishery Service Biological Opinion

These documents are incorporated by reference, as described in 40 CFR 1508.13.

Alternatives

The Environmental Assessment (EA) addresses two alternatives for implementing the Hallwood Floodplain and Side Channel Restoration Project: (1) No Action Alternative and (2) Proposed Action Alternative.

The No Action alternative was not chosen because lack of action would allow the incremental rearing habitat deterioration trend to continue unabated, leading to further declines in juvenile salmonid in-river rearing and inhibiting natural production of anadromous salmonids in the Yuba River.

The Proposed Action alternative was selected over the No Action alternative because implementation of the proposed floodplain and side channel restoration project would enhance salmonid rearing habitat in

the river with funding provided by the AFRP. Salmonid rearing habitat restoration has been identified as a priority action in the CVPIA PEIS, AFRP Final Restoration Plan, and the CALFED's Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP), as well as several California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) publications and plans.

Environmental Impacts

Based upon information contained in the EA, we have determined this Federal action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The basis for a Finding of No Significant Impact is as follows:

1. As a result of formal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and inclusion of conservation measures into the proposed action, no adverse impacts to federally listed or special status species and/or designated critical habitats are expected.
2. Short-term, minor impacts to wildlife may occur from implementing activities related to the habitat improvement. However, avoidance and conservation measures have been incorporated into the proposed action to minimize effects. The intent of this project is to provide additional salmonid rearing habitat and, ultimately, increase the natural production of fall-run and spring-run Chinook Salmon and Central Valley steelhead in the Yuba River.
3. The proposed action is not expected to have long-term adverse effects on wildlife or fisheries, and most effects are expected to be beneficial. The restoration activities in and around the river would increase the potential for maintaining the functional integrity of salmonid habitat requirements, thus protecting and maintaining the natural diversity of fish and wildlife within the watershed.
4. Impact avoidance and conservation measures have been incorporated into the proposed action to minimize adverse effects on water quality and aquatic habitat. The proposed action is expected to have no significant negative impact on flooding potential.
5. The proposed action is not expected to have adverse effects on wetlands or floodplains pursuant to Executive Orders 11990 and 11988. The proposed action supports the preservation of the natural and beneficial values of floodplains.
6. Neither short- nor long-term adverse effects on human health or the environment, nor disproportionate adverse effects to low-income or minority populations are expected, pursuant to Executive Order 12898.
7. The proposed action was determined to have potential to affect the Middle Training Wall, a historic property under Appendix A of the Cultural Resources Programmatic Agreement between the Service, the California State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation. Thus, an MOA was developed, executed, and will be implemented to reduce these findings to a less than significant level. The project activities can proceed under the

stipulation that: if any cultural resources are discovered during the project, work would halt and the Service's Regional Archaeologist shall be contacted.

In addition to analyzing effects on biological and cultural resources, the EA/IS evaluated the following aspects of the physical and human environment for potential significant effects as a result of the proposed action alternative: Surface water and hydrology, water quality, air quality, wetlands, recreation and public safety, and socioeconomics and land use. General measures to minimize environmental effects were incorporated into the proposed action alternative to reduce impacts to a level below significance for those issues for which potentially negative impacts were anticipated.

Public Review and Comment

The Service attended the Informational Public Meeting in Marysville, CA on September 8, 2016 to discuss the project and solicit comments from the local community. The EA/IS was submitted to the California State Clearinghouse and circulated for a 30-day review period. A 10-day extension was requested and granted to Yuba County Water Agency, thus the public comment period closed on November 27, 2017. A Notice of Availability was also posted at the Marysville, CA Post Office. The EA/IS was available for public review and copies by request at the Yuba County Community Development and Planning Department. Comment letters were received from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State Water Quality Control Board, the South Yuba River Citizen's League, the State Lands Commission, the Yuba County Water Agency, Western Aggregates, and Pacific Gas and Electric. Their comments were incorporated into the Final EA/IS and response letters were sent by Yuba County, the CEQA project lead.

Conclusion

Therefore, the Service, as lead Federal agency for the proposed AFRP funding of the Hallwood Floodplain and Side Channel Restoration Project, has determined that the proposal does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment under the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended). As such, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. An Environmental Assessment has been prepared in support of this finding and is available upon request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lodi Fish and Wildlife Office, 850 S Guild Ave #105, Lodi, California 95240.

Assistant Regional Director, Water and Fishery Resources

Date