

DECISION NOTICE
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for
**Reconstruction of the Whiterocks State Fish
Hatchery**

Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission

BACKGROUND AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission (Mitigation Commission) and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (Division) have jointly prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine the effects of a partial reconstruction of the existing Whiterocks State Fish Hatchery. The Draft EA was prepared with public input encouraged by a scoping notice and agency coordination. It was then distributed for review to 50 organizations and individuals. This public involvement process generated additional comments which are reflected in the Final EA.

DECISION

After considering public comments and the analysis of environmental effects, it is my decision to select the Proposed Action for implementation. This action entails that the Mitigation Commission and the Division cooperate to implement the design and partial reconstruction of the existing Whiterocks State Fish Hatchery located near Whiterocks, Uinta County, Utah. The Proposed Action provides for:

Partial reconstruction, operation and maintenance of the Whiterocks Hatchery so that it can satisfy the long-term fish demands (87,700 pounds of fish per year) at the partial reconstruction level.

The Proposed Action will consist of implementation of only the priority 1 items: rehabilitation of the existing water supply and internal water delivery systems, installation of an oxygen injection system, construction of a new hatchery/lab/office building, construction of a truck disinfection station and associated site paving. The facility is located on approximately 14 acres of State-owned lands.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

Fish hatchery restoration and construction is identified in the Commission's Mitigation Plan as a program element. Partial reconstruction of the Whiterocks State Fish Hatchery helps to implement this program element to further the accomplishment of the Commission's Plan. It also best meets the purpose and need as identified in the EA and in the Revised Fish Hatchery Production Plan (Plan).

Meeting the Purpose and Need The Plan EA, the programmatic document from which the EA is tiered, identified the fish production necessary to meet the State of Utah's fishery long term stocking needs and management objectives for the Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP) affected area in Utah. For the Whiterocks State Fish Hatchery, these are fish production to provide cold-water sporting fishing opportunities.

The EA analyzed two alternatives: the Proposed Action, and the No Action Alternative.

Under the Proposed Action, annual production of the facility would increase by approximately 147%, from 35,500 to 87,700 pounds, at a total cost of an estimated \$2.43 million. The 87,700 lb production target for the Whiterocks Hatchery represents the priority 1 utilization of the water supply and site conditions (i.e., land available and latest technology) and reflects the desired species composition, size, and production history.

Addressing the Issues The Proposed Action was selected over the No Action because it best met the needs and purposes, and best addressed the following issues:

- *Water Quality*

A general concern was expressed for potential impacts to stream water quality downstream of the hatchery discharge point. The issue is whether the reconstructed hatchery would be in compliance with the pertinent discharge permit.

Under the Proposed Action, effluent will be treated to comply with the Utah Pollution Discharge Elimination System (UPDES) permit, administered by the Utah Division of Water Quality (LDWQ). Implementation of the Proposed Action and the resultant increase in total capacity at the facility will not necessitate any modification of the existing UPDES permit. Permit requirements and monitoring standards for the reconstructed hatchery will be identical to the present facility. It is anticipated the reconstructed facility will easily comply with permit requirements.

- *Wetlands*

It was recommended that adverse impacts to springs or wetland complexes should be minimized. Agencies also recognized the need to comply with requirements associated with any necessary U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) permit for modification of wetlands.

Impacts to the leased Bureau parcel would stem from excavation and replacement of the existing water collection system. The replacement collection system would consist of a series of perforated pipes with terminal collection boxes buried in infiltration trenches along the general alignment of the existing system. The spring complex overlying the existing collection system encompasses approximately 3.5 acres of jurisdictional wetland. No significant expansion of the existing system footprint is anticipated. Direct construction-related impacts would occur on less than 3.5 acres.

On the 14-acre parcel in state ownership, some of the existing open-water ditches and ponds would be eliminated. This action is necessary to eliminate sediments that support organisms that support the parasite that causes whirling disease. Small wetlands associated with existing pipelines, raceways, and other features will also likely be eliminated. It is anticipated that the Proposed Action will affect an estimated 0.3 acres of wetlands.

All wetland impacts are mitigable and coordination with the Corps on a wetland mitigation plan has been initiated.

- *Noxious Weeds*

A respondent requested that a survey for noxious weeds be conducted to anticipate the scope of potential infestations of areas disturbed during construction. It was further requested that measures to avoid or control these species be described. Surveys for noxious plant species were conducted in conjunction with wetlands delineations, cultural surveys, and other onsite investigations. In addition to those species specifically documented during those surveys, there exist other species that are known to occur in the region that could potentially become established in areas disturbed during construction. Most disturbed areas on the 14-acre hatchery site owned by the state will be paved, landscaped or otherwise revegetated as part of the Proposed Action, thereby minimizing opportunities for noxious weeds to become established. Surface disturbances on the 20-acre leased Bureau parcel will be restricted to that area associated with the water collection system rehabilitation and possibly a small area of uplands that may be used as a temporary staging area for materials used in reconstruction.

Commonly accepted mitigative practices were described and will be implemented.

- *Raptor Protection*

A respondent recommended that appropriate mitigation measures that would minimize adverse impacts to roosting raptors be incorporated when installing power lines. Any temporary or permanent structures or components for power transmission that are required for reconstruction will conform to recommended design configurations as presented in the Avian Power Lines Interaction Committee's most recent publications to minimize risk of raptor electrocutions. Appropriate measures designed to avoid adverse impacts to raptors will be implemented.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on information contained in the EA and supporting documentation, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is made on this action in compliance with the provisions of Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management) and 11990 (Protection of Wetlands). This action would also not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environment Policy Act, for the following reasons.

1. The environmental impacts of this action are not considered significant.
2. Public health and safety are minimally affected by this action.
3. Wetlands will be impacted by implementation of the Proposed Action. A mitigation plan will be developed and implemented under a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permit to mitigate for these impacts.
4. None of the identified environmental effects are considered highly controversial.
5. None of the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The action sets no precedent or decision in principle about other actions which could pose significant environmental effects.
7. This action is related to the potential future action of a complete reconstruction of the hatchery. The impacts of such an action have been evaluated and are not significant.
8. Certain structures on the hatchery grounds qualify for listing on the national Register of Historic Places. These features no longer fill a useful role in hatchery operations. They would be demolished to allow for improved facilities. However, State and Federal historic preservation laws require consultation with historic preservation officials prior to demolition. This process has been initiated, and qualifying structures have been

documented with a series of photographs in accordance with Secretary of Interior standards and guidelines. This will ensure that the historic value of these structures is retained after construction.

9. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the presence of threatened or endangered species (for purposes of the Endangered Species Act) indicated that this action is not likely to affect threatened, endangered or candidate species.
10. This action would not threaten any violations of applicable laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.

IMPLEMENTATION


Site-specific final design and construction of the facilities identified in the Proposed Action will be implemented by the Commission in cooperation with the Division. Interior will provide operation and maintenance (O&M) funding for the additional fish production.

Implementation of the project may occur upon signing this FONSI.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please direct questions on the EA or FONSI to Maureen Wilson, Project Coordinator; Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission; 102 West 500 South, #315, Salt Lake City, Utah 84101 (Phone (801) 524-3146)

Approved:



Michael C. Weland, Executive Director
Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission

Date:

4/30/84