


PRO-FONSI-06-003

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Tropic Ditch Replacement Project
Garfield County, Utah**

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Upper Colorado Region
Provo Area Office
Provo, Utah**

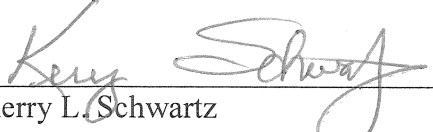
Recommended by:



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10/30/06
Date

Concur:



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10/30/06
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Approved by:



Bruce C. Barrett
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11/1/06
Date

FINDING

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has determined that providing funds to implement the proposed Action Alternative outlined in the Tropic Ditch Replacement Project Environmental Assessment (EA) will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required. This decision was based on a thorough review of the EA and public comments received on the draft EA. This decision is in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public Law 91-90), as amended, and the Council of Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). The National Park Service, Bryce Canyon National Park was a cooperating agency in preparing the EA and has issued its own separate Finding of No Significant Impact.

DECISION

Reclamation has decided to provide Colorado River Salinity Control Program funding to implement Action Alternative 2 as described in the EA. This prescribes an approximate 4 mile pipeline that would replace about 5.5 miles of existing open ditch. The pipeline would start on the east side Highway 22 in Tropic Canyon near the Mossy Cave Trailhead in Bryce Canyon National Park. It would follow about one mile of an existing cattle trail through the park. It would continue to pass through the Tropic Canyon and eventually into the Tropic Valley near the town of Tropic in Garfield County, Utah. The proposed project would allow replacing the existing canal with a pipeline while protecting environmental resources described in Chapter 3 of the EA (i.e. air quality; water quality; upland vegetation; wetlands and riparian resources; fish and wildlife resources; threatened, endangered, candidate, and state sensitive species; cultural resources; paleontological resources; public health and safety; soundscape; transportation; visual resources; recreation; prime and unique farmland; urban quality; and Bryce Canyon National Park operations).

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

A finding of no significant impact is based on the following:

1. The proposed action will have no significant effect on such unique characteristics as cultural resources, wilderness areas, wetlands, and riparian areas.
2. The environmental effects of the proposed action are neither controversial nor do they involve unique or unknown risks.
3. The proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, species either currently listed or proposed for listing as candidate, endangered or threatened species and will not affect designated critical habitat for these species.
4. The proposed action does not threaten to violate a Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.

Reclamation has analyzed the environmental effects, public comments, and the alternatives in detail. Reclamation believes that the Action Alternative 2 best meets the purpose and need described in the EA.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Reclamation sent a Scoping Letter on June 13, 2005, to explain the project to interested individuals, groups, stakeholders, municipalities, organizations, and agencies and to solicit public input regarding the proposed project. Seven responses to the Scoping Letter were received during the public scoping period. The scoping comments were considered in preparing the draft EA, which was made available to the public via the internet and copies in local libraries. It was also mailed to about 25 interested agencies, organizations and individuals for review and comment in June 2006.

Coordination between the Bureau of Reclamation and Bryce Canyon National Park has been occurring to discuss pipeline alignment alternatives, cultural resource impacts, and biological resource impacts. The Utah State Historic Preservation Office and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were consulted pursuant to applicable laws and are involved with all relevant processes. The City of Tropic and Garfield County have also been made aware of the proposed project.

Two comment letters were received and were fully considered in preparing this final EA. The project file in the Provo Area Office contains the comment letters, information on how the comments were considered or addressed, and a complete description of all public involvement activities.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The expected environmental impacts of the Action Alternative are described in Chapter 3 of the EA. The impact analysis was based on the use of the standard operating procedures described in Section 2.3.6. The environmental analysis was focused on the resources mentioned above. The environmental analysis indicates that the impacts will be temporary, short term, and minor.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

Reclamation will require the Tropic and East Fork Irrigation Company (Company) to carry out the following environmental commitments associated with the proposed action (as also stated in Chapter 4 of the EA):

1. Standard Reclamation Management Practices--Standard reclamation management practices will be applied during construction activities to minimize environmental effects and will be implemented by construction personnel or included in contract specifications. Specifically, the amount of open trench allowed during construction and at the end of

each workday will be minimized to protect wildlife. Also, workers will be reminded to drive carefully to avoid collisions with wildlife.

2. Additional Analyses--If in the future the Proposed Action changes significantly from that described in the EA because of additional or new information, additional environmental analyses will be undertaken if necessary.

3. State Stream Alteration Permit--Before implementing the selected alternative, the Company would obtain from the Department of Natural Resources a State Stream Alteration Permit. The conditions and requirements of the State Stream Alteration Permit will be strictly adhered to by the Company.

4. Cultural/Paleontological Resources--Construction personnel will be trained in proper procedures in the event of an inadvertent discovery. Anyone who has inadvertently discovered possible human remains must stop work immediately and contact the National Park Service (435-834-4900) if within the park or Reclamation's archaeologist in the Provo Area Office for all other lands. Work will stop until the proper authorities were able to assess the situation. A "Quick Reference" card explaining the required procedures will be provided by Reclamation to construction workers prior to the start of construction. Instructions for proper procedures in case of inadvertent discovery will be placed in all construction vehicles.

5. Construction Activities Confined to Surveyed Corridor--All construction activities will be confined to the one hundred foot wide surveyed corridor that has been surveyed for cultural and biological resources. Within the Park, only thirty feet of the one hundred foot corridor will be used for construction. Outside of the Park it is expected that only fifty feet of the corridor will be necessary for construction activities.

6. Roads--Existing roads will be used for project activities. No new road construction will be necessary.

7. Disturbed Areas--During construction topsoil will be saved. It will then be redistributed after completion of construction activities. Subsequently, disturbed areas resulting from the project will be smoothed, shaped, contoured, reseeded, and rehabilitated to as near their pre-project construction condition as practicable. Seeding and planting will occur at appropriate times with weed-free seed mixes of native plants. The composition of seed mixes will be coordinated with a wildlife habitat specialist. Following construction, manpower will be provided by the Tropic and East Fork Irrigation Company to inspect the pipeline alignment within the Park to insure that restoration goals are met. Monitoring and treatment will continue until there are two successive years without human intervention.

8. Visual Resources--Rehabilitation measures will be implemented immediately upon completion of the pipeline. This will include re-contouring and reseeded disturbed areas in a natural appearing way, with native vegetation species. The spread of noxious weeds

will be controlled, trash will be cleaned up and construction debris disposed of in designated areas.

9. Air Quality--Best management practices will be implemented to control fugitive dust during construction. The contractor will follow the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's recommended control methods for aggregate storage pile emissions to minimize dust generation, including periodic watering of equipment staging areas, along with dirt and gravel roads. All loads that have the potential of leaving the bed of the truck during transportation will be covered or watered to prevent the generation of fugitive dust. Chemical stabilization will not be allowed.

Construction machinery and operation and maintenance vehicles will be routinely maintained to ensure that engines remain tuned and emission-control equipment is properly functioning as required by law. The contractor will comply with Utah State air quality regulations.

10. Habitat Replacement--A plan to replace wildlife values foregone will be finalized and approved by Reclamation following coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

Completion of these commitments will be closely monitored by Reclamation, and monitoring will also ensure completion of any and all habitat replacement requirements in construction contract specifications, as appropriate.