

DRAFT

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Interim San Joaquin Salmon Conservation and
Research Facility Operations & Maintenance Funding**



June 2013

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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
MID-PACIFIC REGION
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**INTERIM SAN JOAQUIN SALMON CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH FACILITY
OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE FUNDING**

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PROPOSED ACTION

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is funding the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) operation of the existing Interim San Joaquin Salmon Conservation and Research Facility (Interim Facility) from July 1, 2012- December 31, 2015. US Fish and Wildlife's approach to establish a spring run Chinook salmon population is described in an Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 10(a)(1) permit application which includes the Interim Facility as the primary captive rearing facility for the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP). The SJRRP was established in 2006 to implement the Stipulation of Settlement in *NRDC, et al. v. Kirk Rodgers, et al.* (Settlement) and authorized by the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act (PL 111-11).

Operation and maintenance of the Interim Facility would include the development and maintenance of a genetically diverse brood stock of spring-run Chinook salmon, and potentially fall run Chinook. CDFW will also operate the Interim Facility to conduct and support research that furthers conservation of the Chinook salmon species in the SJRRP Restoration Area.

Under the Proposed Action the Interim Facility will to operate using a portion of the 35 cubic feet per second San Joaquin Fish Hatchery water supply. The Proposed Action does not include an increase in combined San Joaquin Fish Hatchery and Interim Facility water supply.

FINDINGS

In accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code and Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508), the Mid-Pacific Region of Reclamation finds that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that will significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for implementing the Proposed Action. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Interim San Joaquin Salmon Conservation and Research Facility Operation and Maintenance Funding.

The public review and comment period for the Draft Interim San Joaquin Salmon Conservation and Research Facility Operations & Maintenance Funding EA began on July __, 2013. Comments were due on ____, 2013. Reclamation received __ comments on the Draft EA. As of the signing of this FONSI, Reclamation responded to all comments received in the Final EA.

The affected environment and environmental consequences analyses as described in the Draft Interim San Joaquin Salmon Conservation and Research Facility Operation and Maintenance Funding EA are summarized below.

1. The Proposed Action will not result in significant impacts to open space or wildlife habitat. Interim Facility operations and maintenance would occur in an area that is developed and not considered open space or wildlife habitat.

2. The Proposed Action would have no direct impact to riparian or wetland habitat. The Proposed Action to provide operations and maintenance funding will not directly result in a discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the U.S. The Proposed Action will not result in an increase in discharge to the San Joaquin River as the Interim Facility would operate on a portion of the 35 cubic feet per second water supply currently dedicated to the San Joaquin Fish Hatchery (SJFH).
3. The Proposed Action will not result in significant impacts to protected species, critical habitat, or Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). The Proposed Action will indirectly have a cumulative beneficial effects from the spring-run Chinook salmon reintroduction efforts of the SJRRP. The Settlement requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to submit an application to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for an ESA Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit for scientific research and the propagation and transport of an experimental population of endangered species. A Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit has been approved by the NMFS that will allow CDFW to transport and propagate spring-run Chinook salmon.

The San Joaquin River above the confluence with the Merced River is currently designated as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for Chinook salmon. It was designated by NMFS due to the presence of suitable spawning habitat and in anticipation of reintroduction of the fish. The Proposed Action would have no direct or indirect impact on EFH.

The action to approve the funding of the operations and maintenance activities at the Interim Facility will have no direct adverse impact to special status species protected under the ESA; designated critical habitat for ESA protected species; designated EFH under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; migratory birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty; and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

4. The Proposed Action will not result in impacts to water supply, water quality, and hydrology. The project will have no direct effect on water supply in the region or increased waste discharges. The Proposed Action will not directly affect the river floodplain functions, baseflow, or groundwater.
5. The Proposed Action will not result in impacts to air quality. The Proposed Action will not result in additional air quality emissions.
6. The Proposed Action will not result in adverse impacts from noise. The nearest noise receptors are residences immediately to the north and to the east of the Interim Facility. The three closest residences may experience minor increases in the ambient noise levels by pumps and recirculation equipment associated with the operation of the Interim Facility. However, the noise-related impacts due to these activities would not result in any exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of applicable standards, exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels, a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels, or a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels.

7. The Proposed Action will not result in adverse impacts to commercial and recreational fisheries. Reach 1 is planted throughout the year with rainbow trout from the SJFH. The area is fished year-round, primarily by local anglers. The Interim Facility will utilize a portion of the SJFH's 35 cfs water supply. The Interim Facility will be operated to conserve water and may include use of recirculation equipment to reduce fresh water needs. These efforts will minimize water needed from the SJFH's supply, enabling CDFW to avoid reducing trout production at the SJFH and stocking rates of local recreational fisheries.
8. The Proposed Action will not result in impacts to cultural resources eligible for listing under the National Historic Preservation Act, 36 CFR Part 800. The Proposed Action includes no ground-disturbing activities. Should archeological or historic resources be identified or affected, these resources will be evaluated and mitigated through consultations with the State Historic Preservation Office, Native American tribes, and interested parties.
9. The Proposed Action will not impact any Indian Trust Assets as it is outside of the range of Tribal lands held in trust. The nearest Indian Trust Asset is Table Mountain Rancheria, which is approximately 4 miles east of the project area.
10. The Proposed Action will not have any direct public health and safety impacts. The amount of flow that would be discharged from the Interim Facility is only a small fraction of the total flow released daily by Friant Dam. The action is not expected to cause or contribute to indirect and cumulative impacts to public health and safety conditions in the San Joaquin River.
11. The Proposed Action will not result in adverse impacts to energy production, consumption, or conservation. The SJFH and Interim Facility consume electricity to power pumps and other equipment necessary for operations and maintenance. The Friant Dam water supply passes through a power plant before being conveyed to both facilities. Operation of the Interim Facility will not change the overall SJFH water supply of 35 cfs released from Friant Dam; power plant operations will be unaffected. Operation of the Interim Facility may require the use of additional electric pumps and ultra-violet (UV) disinfection and micro-screen filtration facilities in order to recycle and flush water through the system. Additional electric costs will vary from year to year depending on the pumping and filtration requirements but would not result in adverse impacts to energy production, consumption, or conservation associated with the Proposed Action.
12. The Proposed Action will not result in adverse impacts to environmental justice. The Proposed Action will not directly impact the Friant community or ethnic communities therein, or disproportionately adversely affect a low income community.
13. The Proposed Action will have no impacts to hazardous materials. The Proposed Action will not generate or disturb an area known to contain hazardous materials.