

U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
INTERIOR REGION 10 – CALIFORNIA-GREAT BASIN
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE
TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM
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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On behalf of the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Redding Field Office have found that the TRRP's project Trinity River Channel Rehabilitation Site: Oregon Gulch (River Mile 80.9 to 81.7) would have no significant impact on the human environment.

The finding is supported by the analysis disclosed in the Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA/IS) of the same title, which was completed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts et seq.). For the purposes of NEPA, the EA portion is tiered to the *Trinity River Mainstem Fishery Restoration Program Environmental Impact Statement* and incorporates by reference the *Channel Rehabilitation and Sediment Management Activities for Remaining Phase 1 and Phase 2 Sites, Part 1: Final Master Environmental Impact Report*.

Recommended by:

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May 3, 2021

Date

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Approved by:

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FONSI No. CGB-EA-2021-013

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FONSI No. DOI-BLM-CA-N060-2021-0002-EA

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Trinity River Channel Rehabilitation Site:
Oregon Gulch (River Mile 80.9 to 81.7)

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Background and Need

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) completed the Trinity River Division (TRD) of the Central Valley Project (CVP) in 1964, blocking the passage of salmonids and lamprey to habitat upstream of Lewiston Dam and restricting anadromous fish to habitat downstream. The TRD also eliminated coarse sediment transport from over 700 square miles of the upper watershed. Trans-basin diversions from Lewiston Lake diminished annual flows by up to 90 percent and altered the hydrologic regime of the Trinity River for a 40-mile reach downstream. The consequences of diminished flows included encroachment of riparian vegetation, the establishment of riparian berms, and changes in alluvial processes at various locations along the river as far downstream as the North Fork Trinity River. These geomorphic changes resulted in a decrease in the diversity of species and age classes of riparian vegetation along the river, impaired floodplain function, and adversely affected fish habitat.

In 1994, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), as the lead agency for NEPA, and Trinity County, as the lead agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), began the NEPA/CEQA process for developing the Trinity River Mainstem Fishery Restoration Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The 2000 Record of Decision (ROD) for the Trinity River Mainstem Fishery Restoration Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (FEIS/EIR) (December 19, 2000; USDI 2000) directed Reclamation and the USFWS to implement the Flow Evaluation Alternative, coupled with additional watershed protection efforts (described in the Mechanical Restoration Alternative), as the Preferred Alternative identified in the FEIS/EIR to restore the Trinity River's anadromous fishery. Through the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP), the ROD directed Reclamation to restore the Trinity River fishery by implementing a combination of higher variable releases from Lewiston Dam (up to 11,000 cubic feet per second [cfs]), floodplain infrastructure improvements, channel rehabilitation projects, fine and coarse sediment management, watershed

restoration, and an Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management Program. As a project-level NEPA document, the FEIS/EIR provides guidance for policy decisions associated with managing Trinity River flows, and as a programmatic NEPA document, it provides first-tier support of related mechanical restoration and sediment management actions. The 2009 Master EIR provided a more specific analysis of non-flow elements of the TRRP and was incorporated by reference in the NEPA document for the Proposed Action to support NEPA decisions required by Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The TRRP, acting under the guidance of the Trinity Management Council (TMC), provides the overall program direction required to implement the 2000 ROD. TMC member agencies include Reclamation, USFWS, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Hoopa Valley Tribe (HVT), the Yurok Tribe (YT), the California Natural Resources Agency represented by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), and Trinity County. In addition to providing technical expertise for the design and review of the rehabilitation sites, the TRRP provides technical and administrative support to the TMC related to both scientific evaluations of the restoration progress and management implementation.

The TRRP is responsible for the overall implementation of the 2009 Master EIR, which identified the Oregon Gulch site as a Trinity River rehabilitation site. The Trinity River Channel Rehabilitation Site: Oregon Gulch (River Mile [RM] 80.9 to 81.7) project (Proposed Action) includes placement of a new bend in the river, reduction of riparian encroachment, placement of large wood, physical alteration of alluvial features (e.g., floodplains and side channels), construction of hydraulic structures (wood and log features, aka Structured Log Jams [SLJs]), and removal/replacement of riparian vegetation at strategic locations. Extensive revegetation of native riparian vegetation areas (woody and wetland species) and management of upland mixed-conifer habitats are included in the Proposed Action. These rehabilitation activities would increase habitat suitability and availability for salmonids and other native fish and wildlife species during a wide range of river flow conditions. The Oregon Gulch site is located in part on public lands managed by the BLM Redding Field Office. Depending on available funding, construction activities are anticipated to begin as early as fall 2021, with the hauling of legacy mining tailings out of the floodplain to a nearby quarry, and may continue through 2026. Construction activities near residential areas would be scheduled between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. No construction activities would be scheduled for Sundays.

The Oregon Gulch project reach begins approximately 1.3 miles upstream of the Dutch Creek Road Bridge in Junction City (Figure 1-1). Habitat for threatened salmonids, steelhead, and other aquatic and riparian species is currently impaired throughout this reach by the legacy of dredger mining and water diversions that have altered natural variable flows. The project environmental study limit (ESL or the project site) encompasses approximately 134 acres, including 96 acres of BLM-managed land and 38 acres of private land (Figure 2-1). Activities would take place on approximately 79 acres. [All figures, tables, appendices, and citations referenced in this document are in the EA/IS.]

Access to the project ESL on river right is via Sky Ranch Road, which intersects State Route (SR) 299 approximately 1 mile north of the project ESL. Project entry to river left does not include vehicle access. Equipment would access river left activity areas from across the river using temporary crossings.

Rehabilitation activities directed by the ROD and further described in the EA/IS, in conjunction with annual ROD flow releases, are expected to contribute to the restoration of the Trinity River mainstem fishery. Implementing channel rehabilitation work at the Oregon Gulch site would continue the implementation of the ROD and would contribute to the restoration of aquatic habitat in the mainstem Trinity River through the development of properly functioning channel conditions. The location of the Oregon Gulch project in relation to other TRRP sites is illustrated in Figure 1-1.

The EA/IS for the project considered two alternatives: the No Action Alternative (Alternative 2 in the EA/IS) and the Proposed Action (Alternative 1 in the EA/IS). After considering the environmental commitments and project design features listed in Chapter 2 and Appendix D, impacts from the Proposed Action would be less than significant pursuant to NEPA. Details concerning these alternatives and other alternatives considered but not carried forward for evaluation are included in Chapter 2.

Activity areas are labeled using an alpha-numeric system based on the type of activity that would occur in a specific place. Riverine activities are labeled with an R followed by the construction site number (e.g., R-1, R-2); upland activities are labeled with a U followed by the construction site number; in-channel work areas are identified with an IC; access routes are identified with an A, and construction staging/use areas are identified with a C followed by the construction site number.

The TRRP has developed programmatic objectives for channel rehabilitation projects that are described in Chapter 2 of the EA/IS. Ultimately, the goals of the channel rehabilitation efforts are to provide functional aquatic habitat for all life stages of anadromous salmonids over a range of flow conditions; to provide suitable salmonid rearing habitat, presently believed to be a limiting factor in the system; and to reestablish healthy alluvial river geomorphic processes that would maintain high-quality salmonid habitat at a dynamic equilibrium.

Proposed Action (Alternative 1)

The activities proposed at the Oregon Gulch site are briefly described below; additional details are provided in Chapter 2 and Appendix D of the EA/IS.

The Proposed Action has been developed to strike a balance between active (e.g., construction) and passive (e.g., flow regime changes) methods for restoring aquatic and riparian habitat while supporting smaller scale dynamic fluvial geomorphic processes that existed before Lewiston Dam was completed.

The Proposed Action consists of a number of rehabilitation activities at the Oregon Gulch site. These activities are based and expand on those described and analyzed in Section 2.3.2 of the Master EIR (Regional Water Board and Reclamation 2009).

The proposed rehabilitation activities are briefly described below. Appendix D of the EA/IS provides an in-depth description of the design objectives and discusses each activity area in detail. Except for recontouring and vegetation removal, each activity type and activity area has been assigned a unique alphabetic and numeric identification and descriptive label that corresponds to the type and location of the activity areas illustrated in Figure 2-1 and described in Table 2-1.

Recontouring and Vegetation Removal

Under the recontouring and vegetation removal activities, the ground surface would be modified to reduce riparian encroachment and the risk of stranding of juvenile salmonids. To varying degrees, vegetation would be cleared and removed at all activity areas that would be subject to rehabilitation activities. Where recontouring is part of the Proposed Action (e.g., floodplain lowering), the entire site would be subject to vegetation removal, but, where possible, riparian vegetation (e.g., willows) would be salvaged and stored within the project ESL for use in subsequent revegetation efforts.

Grading would be required to construct or enhance topographic features that could develop into functional riparian habitat; excavation and the placement of fill would be balanced. In addition to the activity areas that would be cleared before grading, site-specific removal of whole trees (e.g., conifers and hardwoods) would be required to enhance the worksite's safety and reduce fuel loading and improve local conditions

for individual tree growth and wildlife. As illustrated by Figure 2-1, upland and contractor use areas include discrete locations where removal of vegetation is anticipated based on coordination with, and authorization by, the BLM and private landowners.

Vegetation removed from activity areas, including contractor use areas, would be used for project wood placement as habitat or SLJs. Large wood would also be chipped or masticated for use as organic material to increase nutrients and enhance the water holding in revegetation areas. Activities would be completed using a variety of methods, including hand tools and heavy equipment such as excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks, and, potentially, scrapers. Where feasible, existing native riparian vegetation would be maintained in “save vegetation areas” to facilitate future recruitment. To reduce or eliminate the need to import wood from off-site for use in design features, mature trees at the site may be used in the construction of habitat and flow modification features (SLJs), if/as authorized by landowners. Using trees from the site would reduce the potential for introducing invasive species such as weeds and insects, and plant pathogens to the site.

Riverine Construction (R) - Lowered Floodplains, Collection Channel

Three lowered floodplains (R-1, R-2, and R-3) would be constructed to be inundated and function at relatively low river discharges ranging from about 600 cfs to more than 7,000 cfs. These activities are intended to expand the surface area of the channel that could be inundated by reoccurring flows below the ordinary high-water mark (the 1.5-year recurrence flow).

Together, R-1, R-2, and R-3 represent 16.7 acres of the new floodplain that would provide abundant high-quality juvenile rearing habitat at discharge levels that are frequently exceeded during the months when juvenile salmon are in the river. Construction of these floodplains would require a total excavation volume of 334,590 cubic yards of material. The vast majority of processed alluvial material would be sourced from and processed within the project ESL or the Eagle Rock quarry. However, some material from other areas within the Trinity River watershed may also be used as needed. Unprocessed dirt and gravel, referred to as “pit-run,” from on-site excavation could be used in the construction of upland, riverine, and in-channel features and for habitat enhancement. Rock processing would be continuously monitored for compliance with turbidity standards when equipment is working in or near the river. If necessary, a portion of the R areas and C-1 would be used to process and store river rock into needed size categories for use in project construction.

Due to their low elevation and large width, the R-1, R-2, and R-3 floodplains are expected to be depositional in some areas and experience scour in other areas. In a stage-zero inspired river restoration design, such as for the Proposed Action, natural deposition and scour work in concert to restore a river’s equilibrium and help to create complex channels with high habitat value for native species. Deposition is expected to be the dominant geomorphic process in the upstream third of R-1, whereas local scour, possibly involving the incision of new secondary channels, is more likely toward the downstream end. Overbank deposition is likely in R-2 and R-3, whereas scour is unlikely in those areas due to their positions along the right valley margins. The low elevation of the valley grade surface would also encourage rapid colonization of riparian vegetation, which would increase both trophic production and the quality of rearing habitat quality in the area.

The valley-grade surface spans the full longitudinal extent of the project site. The existing surfaces in the valley grade area contain tailings piles and some depressions at elevations near or below the valley grade surface. These depressions, which include one deep open-water pond, would be retained in the final floodplain surfaces. In addition, the final surfaces would incorporate woody debris, transplanted willow clumps, and preserved patches of desirable existing vegetation to increase hydraulic roughness. In conjunction with the design of the main river channel (IC-1, described below), these three floodplains are designed to inundate at discharges near 600 cfs.

In-Channel Construction (IC)

In-channel construction includes activities that would occur in the river under base flow conditions (e.g., 450 cfs) during the in-channel construction window (July 15 to October 15). After September 15, BMPs would be in place to minimize impacts to adult coho and Chinook salmon. During construction of in-channel activity areas, earthen berms would be left as necessary near the upstream and downstream ends of constructed features to ensure that water quality standards are met. These berms would be removed by the end of construction if the water within these contained areas is of appropriate quality for discharge to the river, or they may be left in place for removal by subsequent high flows. Alternatively, water in the constructed features may be pumped to uplands or slowly metered into the mainstem river to reduce the amount of turbid water that would reach the Trinity River to ensure that water quality permit requirements are met (e.g., no more than 20 nephelometric turbidity units (NTUs) at 500 feet downstream of construction).

The Proposed Action would include a meander channel complex consisting of a channel (IC-1), a slough (IC-2), and wetlands (W-1 and W-2). Large wood placement in structures SLJ-1 and SLJ-2) at the downstream end of the project site would increase topographic and hydraulic diversity and promote roughness and vegetation establishment. Construction of this complex would increase channel length, complexity, and sinuosity and would also increase slope in this section of the channel to facilitate boat passage. The meander complex and floodplain would provide a diversity of water depths and velocities across a wider range of flows than the existing mainstem channel configuration.

The meander complex, wetlands, slough, and wood structures would restore complexity to the river and promote a dynamic channel morphology. Activities in area IC-1 would form the meander channel with the two adjacent wetlands (W-1 and W-2) and a slough with a medial bar (IC-2) that would hold slackwater at flows below 600 cfs. The IC-1 channel would provide baseflow water conveyance and boat passage through the R-1 floodplain area through a bend to the right forced by the U-2 constructed landslide deposit. Flows greater than about 600 cfs would spill over the channel banks and inundate the R-1 floodplain, generating large increases in the wetted area and rearing habitat availability as flows increase, with the range of flows typical of the period when juvenile salmon are in the river. Excavation of the IC-1 channel would require 181,900 cubic yards of excavation.

The IC-2 slough occupies a 600-foot-long section of the Trinity River channel downstream from the U-2 constructed landslide deposit. This section of the channel would be partially filled with clean gravel and cobble to construct a diagonal bar that crosses the slough from right to left; large wood and slash would also be placed in the slough. The slough would contain slackwater when mainstem flows are less than about 600 cfs. At flows greater than 600 cfs, the slough would receive discharge conveyed across the R-1 floodplain. The slough would maintain flowing water with velocities suitable for juvenile Chinook salmon rearing (less than 2 ft/sec) over at least half of its area at flows up to 4,000 cfs.

Wetlands W-1 and W-2 are features that already exist on the landscape. These two wetland features would be left intact to preserve over-summer salmon rearing habitat and habitats used by frogs, turtles, and other riverine species. Both wetland features are surrounded by desirable vegetation that would also be preserved. Because these wetlands are located in areas where inundation frequently occurs, they can be easily occupied by the main river flow and could potentially contribute to developing an anastomosing channel pattern.

Upland (U)

Excavated materials (e.g., fill) that would not be used for instream construction would be placed in an upland area (U-1) as fill on terraces formerly subjected to a variety of placer mining activities and in a constructed landslide deposit area (U-2) that would divert the river from its existing channel into the new IC-1 alignment along the right margin of the valley, as described above. The U-2 area would cover 6.7

acres, requiring a net fill of about 40,900 cubic yards. U-1 would accommodate approximately 143,000 cubic yards of excavated material on 5.6 acres. Upland activity areas have been located to ensure that there would be no increase in the elevation of the 100-year floodplain, consistent with requirements of Trinity County's Floodplain Ordinance.

The primary purpose of the U-2 constructed landslide is to divert the Trinity River from its existing channel into a new alignment at IC-1 along the right margin of the valley. The U-2 feature consists of a large mound of well-graded alluvium that rises gradually from river level at the upstream edge of the R-1 floodplain. The bulk of the material used to construct U-2 would be the raw alluvial material obtained from excavation at the Oregon Gulch site. Some portions of U-2, however, are expected to experience relatively high shear stresses during floods, so the design incorporates cobbles, small boulders, and large wood to ensure that the feature remains in place.

Detailed Master EIR Activities to Provide Clarity Beyond That in Master EIR Table 2-1 and Its Activity Descriptions

Impacts associated with the use of organic (e.g., large wood, slash) and inorganic (e.g., boulders) materials were covered in the Master EIR under Sediment Management activities along with other activities that would facilitate channel construction and maintenance (e.g., excavation and placement of alluvial material in in-channel and riverine areas).

Woody material is a natural part of healthy rivers. It provides essential habitat for aquatic species by providing cover from high flows and predators. In addition, the low-velocity areas collect suitable spawning materials, and woody organic materials are a food source for aquatic insects. It can also help create and maintain beneficial habitat features such as pools, islands, and gravel bars.

The installation of structured log jams (SLJs) and wood placement (WP) are intended to mimic natural wood features that form under historic conditions. The primary on-site sources of wood would include upland and contractor use areas and, to a lesser degree, riverine excavation areas. Where possible, whole trees, including the rootwad, would be removed and used to construct SLJ and WP features. In addition, trees removed as part of clearing activities may be felled, bucked, and yarded to locations where SLJs are constructed to meet size specifications. Slash generated from tree removal activities would also be incorporated into the SLJ features and wood placement. Excess slash would be chipped or masticated and used as mulch for erosion control and revegetation efforts. Figure 2-1 shows where SLJ1 and SLJ2 would be built.

A combination of SLJ and WP features would be used to strengthen erosive points in select activity areas (e.g., IC-1 and R-1) until vegetation is established. In addition to erosion control, wood features would be integrated into the design of R and IC activity areas to provide habitat cover and structure and would slow high-flow velocities to improve aquatic habitat over a range of flows. Slash from on-site and off-site sources would be used to increase site productivity, provide effective ground cover on disturbed areas, and function as cover habitat for terrestrial organisms.

Project features incorporating large wood pieces were designed to create habitat and prevent the recapture of the existing mainstem, while simultaneously allowing the design channel morphology to evolve over time naturally. In total, up to 400 logs, 1,700 cubic yards of slash, and 18 whole trees would be incorporated into wood placement and habitat structures (see Appendix D).

SLJs would include toe logs set at the same elevation as the channel bed elevation. These logs would stabilize the toe of the channel bank and provide a foundation for building the key logs, slash pile, cuttings, and rock, and reduce the tendency for the toe of the bank to slump in case channel incision occurs. A layer of key logs to hold the structure together would be installed on top of the toe logs

perpendicular to flow. In some cases, it may be beneficial to place the rootwads of key logs into the flow path at a minimum of a 45-degree angle to flow, which would increase stability of the SLJ. Slash would be placed under some of the key log rootwads as well as thin layers on top of the key rootwads before the addition of ballast and backfill. The intended result is a sequence of cut banks, rootwad cover, and fine woody debris, providing year-round salmonid rearing habitat and better protecting the channel bank from erosion.

Because of uncertainties about the availability, types, shapes, and sizes of the wood and the planned construction methods, the exact amounts and locations of wood placement are not known at this time. Trees, treetops, and branches for use in constructing large wood structures would be obtained onsite¹ and/or opportunistically from other lawful sources (e.g., public or private lands where vegetation management activities have occurred) and delivered to the project ESL. Final WP locations and dimensions of SLJs would be determined in the field based on direction from Reclamation's field engineer.

Contractor Use Areas (C)

Contractor use areas would be used for stockpiling materials, staging equipment, contractor parking, and similar activities. They may also serve as transportation corridors for moving equipment and materials from one activity area to another. To the extent possible, sensitive areas within contractor use areas (e.g., wetland and riparian areas) would be maintained. As needed, a portion of C-1 would be used to process and sort river rock into needed sizes for use in project construction. Water from on-site sources² would be applied to these areas for dust abatement.

Construction access to the site would be via Sky Ranch Road using two new temporary access routes and an existing road. Access within the site would use these new routes as well as an existing road network that would connect the project design features to contractor use areas and upland spoil areas. Restoration of the river valley at the site requires moving spoils to upslope locations, one of which is the U-1 spoils area located about 1,000 feet to the south of the main rehabilitation area (shown in light yellow on Figure 2-1). U-1 would accommodate approximately 143,000 cubic yards of excavated material.

Access Routes and Temporary Crossings (A)

Temporary access routes and crossings would be constructed to connect the activity areas to the primary entrance route (Figure 2-1 and Table 2-1). Access roads would support equipment access and construction within the project ESL. Whenever possible, existing roads would be used for access, although some widening may be necessary. To comply with WSRA requirements, road use would remain inconspicuous to river users and those outside of the project area, and the roads would not be actively maintained. Temporary access routes would be decommissioned and revegetated with native species after the project is completed as part of the revegetation plan. It is anticipated that access routes would be used for up to 5 years post-project for revegetation management (e.g., planting and irrigation). The temporary access routes would then be removed or converted to walking trails.

After IC-1 construction, the construction of river fords would be required where access had originally been constructed during excavation of the IC-1 channel. Temporary crossings would be created using imported clean gravel and native alluvial materials excavated from the bed and bank of the Trinity River, authorized activity areas, or other clean adjacent sources (e.g., the Eagle Rock quarry). Temporary crossings (e.g., at A-5, A-6, and A-7) would be designed and constructed, as needed, to meet requirements for heavy equipment such as trucks and excavators.

¹ Appendix D, Table D-5 lists the maximum estimated tree removal for each activity area.

² Water pumps used in the Trinity River would conform to CDFW and NMFS screening criteria.

The number of vehicle trips using river crossings would be minimized to the extent possible, and these fords would not be used to transport construction materials (e.g., large wood and vegetation materials) across the river. Due to requirements to retain passage for fish and boats, at least one-third of a river crossing would be submerged to a minimum depth of 1 foot under base flow conditions. Construction of such temporary river crossings would likely require some vegetation removal on either side of the crossings. All temporary crossings would be constructed in a manner that would not impede the passage of aquatic organisms or navigability of vessels at the crossings. A temporary crossing at A-9 would be built of clean material after IC-1 is open to river flows and, therefore, would not need to allow passage of aquatic species and boats.

If post-construction revegetation efforts require maintenance (additional plantings or irrigation), a temporary crossing may be constructed along the IC-1 channel to provide equipment access during the in-river work period.

BMPs would be used to reduce the impacts of road-related sediment on the riparian and aquatic environments (see Appendix E – Environmental Commitments).

Revegetation

Approximately 39.5 acres would be disturbed by project activities. The removal of tailings and subsequent reconstruction would result in several new landforms. A new large upland feature at U-1 (5.6 acres) and new floodplain landforms at R-1, R-2, and R-3 (16.7 acres) would include existing ponds, wetlands, and forested islands. These areas would require active revegetation. The 9.0 acres at the IC-1 and IC-2 features would not require revegetation because they would become in-channel features. About 1.4 acres of existing wetlands and 0.1 acre of wood features would require little or no revegetation. The 6.7-acre constructed landslide deposit would be seeded with native grasses and mulched to reduce non-native infestation. The upland areas would also be planted with acorns and dry land plant materials. Although most of the ESL's 134 acres is denuded of vegetation because of the deep layers of tailings, the construction of project features would remove approximately 18 acres of vegetation. Most of the vegetation to be removed occurs on tailings between 4 and 30 feet above the historic floodplain elevation. Existing vegetation at or below the final constructed elevation would remain in place. The new floodplain would be markedly different from existing conditions. Monthly mean flows will inundate the entire 18-acre floodplain through June during the first few years after construction. This inundation will create favorable conditions for riparian vegetation recruitment and vigor. The area will be reconfigured by the inundation, increasing surface heterogeneity, and the potential for complex channel and riparian vegetation interactions over time.

Primary revegetation prescriptions include:

- Willow clumps and cottonwood poles – rooted willows would be salvaged from areas subjected to construction activities.
- Willow and cottonwood clusters – primary revegetation from both salvaged and nursery stock would be planted on the new floodplain surfaces.
- Cottonwood-dominant upland plantings – would contain a combination of long cottonwood poles, bareroot/container plantings, and acorn plantings.
- Upland plantings – bare root/container plantings and acorn plantings of plants suited to hot, dry conditions.
- Seeding – would consist of seeding with a mix of native herbaceous forb and grass species suited to hot, dry conditions.

Impacts on vegetation are anticipated in most activity areas. Unlike other activities, revegetation is not illustrated in Figure 2-1 because it overlaps with most other activity areas. Most of the areas left barren after construction (e.g., spoils areas, graded features, and disturbed portions of contractor-use areas) would be planted. However, no areas would be disturbed explicitly so that they would be replanted. The temporary access routes would be planted with conifers and madrones as part of decommissioning.

Project activities are designed to ensure that riparian vegetation, in particular, is minimally affected by the implementation of the Proposed Action and is replaced at a 1:1 ratio with plantings and natural revegetation to meet CDFW's standard of no net loss of riparian area habitat within the Trinity River corridor. Revegetation would provide aquatic refugia at high flows, improve terrestrial habitat for birds and other wildlife, provide future wood recruitment, and provide future terrestrial nutrient input to the river. Revegetation efforts would emphasize actions to create conditions that promote natural revegetation via the creation of wet (riparian) conditions. These efforts would include incorporating woody material into the soil matrix in upland activity areas to enhance moisture retention.

Revegetation of riparian and upland areas would rely on a combination of planting and natural recruitment of native species, consistent with TRRP's 2016 Draft RRMP and the needs of the BLM and other cooperating, responsible, and trustee agencies and landowners. Native willows salvaged from activity areas during initial clearing efforts would be stored and used to revegetate activity areas; the willows would be replanted during construction to speed vegetation recovery. Replanting of affected native vegetation (e.g., shrubs, trees) would be completed after construction following a site-specific revegetation plan prepared by the TRRP and may include watering during the first 3 years post-planting. Water for any irrigation would be pumped from the Trinity River, consistent with existing riparian water rights as made available from willing landowners or the river on public lands as authorized by the BLM. Post-project monitoring may indicate the need for additional irrigation and other measures to ensure successful revegetation. These measures may include weeding, in-planting, and replanting, as conditions require.

The revegetation plan at the Oregon Gulch rehabilitation site would include several planting zones; each zone would have different combinations of herbaceous, shrub, and tree species. Plantings in wetlands and at the toe of slopes would be herbaceous and have approximately 3 feet between plant centers, with about 5,500 plants per acre. Plantings in willow, cottonwood, and transition zones would be sedges, shrubs, and trees and would have approximately 5 to 8 feet between plant centers, with about 872 plants per acre. Plantings in upland zones would be shrubs and trees and would have approximately 10 to 12 feet between plant centers with about 326 plants per acre. Willow trenches would be installed, and willow cuttings would be planted at the density of 10 trees per linear foot.

Soil amendments, such as locally obtained wood grindings and slash, would be incorporated into the soil before planting, and all disturbed areas greater than 4 feet above the summer baseflow water surface elevation would be mulched with weed-free wheat straw at the rate of 2 tons per acre. Revegetation activities (e.g., planting and watering, as appropriate) may start during the latter part of the construction efforts and would continue during the wet season (October through March) after final grading, and site stabilization measures have been completed. Planting and seeding efforts may extend into the year following construction, depending on site and weather conditions. Herbaceous bare root material and hardwood support poles would be used if planting occurs in or after November.

Construction Methods and Schedule

The proposed activities would take place in two phases. If fully implemented, the first phase could transport up to 500,000 yards of material in approximately 1.5 years before in-stream channel rehabilitation work. Initial excavation and rock hauling (Phase 1) could begin as soon as the fall of 2021. Once the majority of excavation and transport of mine tailings has been completed, work would shift to

in-channel restoration work. In-channel and floodplain work would most likely occur over one summer–fall period, although the schedule is also dependent on funding. Based upon current TRRP funding levels, project work would take longer and could continue through the summer of 2026. The intensity of trucking materials to the Eagle Rock quarry would be substantially decreased if the project duration is extended.

In general, in-river construction is proposed to take place between July 15 and October 15. After September 15, additional BMPs would be in place to minimize impacts to adult coho and Chinook salmon. Excavation, processing of excavated material, and placement of excess material in Oregon Gulch upland areas would occur primarily during the in-river construction window. Floodplain and upslope construction (e.g., excavation and movement of materials to upslope areas and revegetation) would take place concurrently, but also could occur throughout the year so long as water quality impacts were immeasurable. Revegetation activities would occur primarily in the wet months. The rehabilitation activities are proposed for implementation in the summer after removing materials to the Eagle Rock quarry, which would be between 2023 and 2026. Large-scale revegetation efforts would not occur until the fall after construction. After site construction, maintenance activities (including efforts to maintain or enhance vegetation or riverine habitat diversity (e.g., channel topography)) may be conducted as needed in authorized public land use areas in accordance with the general environmental commitments listed in Appendix E. A detailed discussion of the construction methods and activities is provided in Appendix D.

The flow-release schedule established for a particular water year could limit surface disturbance activities below the ordinary high-water mark during the late spring through early summer. Processing of alluvial material (e.g., from IC-1 or the R-areas) on-site would occur during the summer–fall construction period. Revegetation work (e.g., planting of willow pole cuttings and/or container plants and seeding with native grasses) would generally occur during construction, in the wet season (fall/winter) following construction, or during subsequent wet seasons after construction. Construction activities for site maintenance would be conducted as needed post-project during the period covered by the BLM ROW; affected landowners would be notified in advance.

FINDINGS

Both the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives were evaluated in the EA/IS with respect to their impacts in the following issue areas: land use, geomorphic environment, water resources, water quality, fishery resources, vegetation, wildlife, wetlands, recreation, socioeconomics, cultural resources, air quality, visual resources, hazards and hazardous materials, noise, public services and utilities/energy, transportation/traffic circulation, environmental justice, and tribal trust. Based on the following summary of the implementation effects of the Proposed Action (as discussed fully in the EA/IS), there would be no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a supplement to the existing EIS is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Aesthetics/Visual Resources

Potential impacts of project activities on visual resources would include changes brought about by the removal of vegetation, construction of inundated surfaces, creation of access roads, and the presence of equipment in the project ESL. These activities could result in temporary degradation and/or obstruction of a scenic view. Over the long term, implementation of the Proposed Action is expected to complement the project ESL's visual resources and aesthetic values by restoring the function and form typical of an alluvial river. The design of the Proposed Action incorporates the diversity of the landscape and vegetation types in the project vicinity into the character of the rehabilitated riverine and upland areas. Retention of existing topographic features and natural revegetation and manual planting would lessen the degree of visual impacts and improve the aesthetic quality of the affected reach of the Trinity River.

Air Quality including Greenhouse Gases

Construction activities would generate short-term and localized fugitive dust and gas and diesel emissions that could affect air quality. Reclamation would implement project design features and environmental commitments, including requiring provisions in construction documents that minimize construction-related impacts on air quality in order to minimize impacts to air quality (see Appendix E – Environmental Commitments).

Cultural Resources

The BLM has designated Reclamation as the lead federal agency for the Section 106 process for this Proposed Action on behalf of both agencies. Pursuant to NHPA Section 106 36 CFR Section 800, Reclamation has completed the identification and evaluation process through consultation with federally recognized tribes and interested parties, evaluated resources for their eligibility for the NRHP, and assessed adverse effects and made a determination regarding effects on cultural resources. Reclamation, in collaboration with BLM, has determined that there would be no adverse effect to historic properties by the Proposed Action. A Section 106 consultation package for the Proposed Action was prepared for and delivered to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for the SHPO's consideration of the lead agency's recommendation. SHPO has concurred with Reclamation that no adverse effect to historic properties would occur.

Indian Sacred Sites

The Proposed Action would not limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian Sacred Sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites because none have been identified in or near the boundaries of the Proposed Action.

Environmental Justice

Minority (economically disadvantaged) populations are located in the vicinity of the Proposed Action. However, these populations would not be disproportionately affected by project activities. Post-construction, the Proposed Action would benefit the entire community in the way of a rehabilitated segment of the river corridor with improved aesthetics and wildlife habitat, and fishery resources.

Fisheries Resources

To comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), TRRP staff submitted a Biological Assessment (BA) to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in December 2019 concerning TRRP effects on the federally and state-listed (threatened) Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast (SONCC) evolutionarily significant unit of coho salmon. The TRRP office completed formal consultation with NMFS on the effects of TRRP sediment management and channel rehabilitation and scientific monitoring, and the potential effects of floodplain restoration work throughout the Trinity River watershed rather than only on the mainstem Trinity River. The NMFS' August 2020 Trinity River Restoration Program Biological Opinion describes the implementation strategies and conservation measures that will be employed during proposed TRRP construction at the Oregon Gulch Project.

Temporary construction impacts on fish-rearing habitat would be minimized through the implementation of environmental commitments and project design features. In the long term, changes to the physical rearing habitat associated with project implementation are expected to be beneficial. Collective improvements in fluvial channel dynamics contributed by the Proposed Action, in conjunction with future channel rehabilitation projects throughout the Trinity River between Lewiston Dam and the North Fork Trinity River, are ultimately expected to improve spawning and rearing habitat for all life stages of anadromous salmonids. Because effects would generally be localized and because the Proposed Action includes commitments and project design features to avoid and minimize adverse impacts on fish; effects to fisheries resources would be less than significant.

Geomorphology and Soils, including Geology, Geological Hazards, and Mineral Resources

Implementation of the Proposed Action, including the environmental commitments and project design features listed in Chapter 2 and Appendix D, would be consistent with the 10 healthy river attributes described in the Trinity River Flow Evaluation Study (USFWS and HVT 1999), the basis for the TRRP efforts to restore and enhance native fish and wildlife populations. It is also consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, as described in Appendix C. Project construction activities and related disturbance would increase the potential for short-term wind and water erosion, sediment transport, soil compaction, and mercury methylation. However, project implementation would include project design features such as sediment and erosion control measures to reduce and avoid potential short-term construction impacts on soils. The Proposed Action is consistent with mercury mitigation that would reduce the potential for methylation. Unique geologic resources or hazards are not present in the project ESL. Therefore, impacts on these resources would be less than significant.

Hazardous Materials and Petroleum Products

Activities associated with the Proposed Action would use potentially hazardous materials (e.g., solvents) and petroleum products (e.g., oil and fuels) associated with the operation of vehicles and construction equipment during implementation. Implementation of environmental commitments and BMPs (e.g., proper equipment maintenance and materials storage) would minimize the potential for accidental releases of any project-related hazardous materials or petroleum products (see Appendix E). These practices would ensure that impacts from hazardous material and petroleum product losses would be less than significant.

Hydrology and Flooding

Based on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Hydraulic Engineering Center River Analysis System (HEC-RAS) model used by Trinity County to assess compliance with Trinity County's Flood Hazard Zoning, implementation of the Proposed Action, including excavation or placement of alluvial materials in the 100-year floodplain and low-flow channel, would not increase the base flood elevation of the Trinity River near structures. Additionally, project implementation would not result in a significant risk of injury, death, or loss involving flooding or erosional processes. The proposed activities are expected to have minimal if any, effects on groundwater elevations or groundwater quality. Therefore, the impacts on water resources would be less than significant.

Indian Trust Assets

TRRP's overarching goals of restoring, enhancing, and conserving the natural production of anadromous fisheries, native plant communities, associated wildlife resources, and overall health of the Trinity River basin are consistent with federal Tribal Trust responsibilities. The primary TRRP goals originate partly from the federal government's trust responsibility to protect fishing rights for ceremonial, subsistence, and commercial purposes of the region's Indian tribes. Under the Proposed Action, the Trinity River would continue to support Tribal Trust assets. Several short-term impacts would occur that would affect Tribal Trust assets, including impacts to geology, fluvial geomorphology, and soils; water quality; fishery resources; and vegetation, wildlife, and wetlands. These impacts are generally associated with construction activities that would temporarily affect resources in the project ESL. Potential impacts on Tribal Trust assets would be minimized by project design criteria implemented to protect those assets. The impacts to Tribal Trust assets would be less than significant.

Land Use, including Agricultural Lands

The Proposed Action would not change the uses of the project ESL lands nor require changes to land use allocations or zoning designations, including agricultural forest lands. Temporary disruptions to nearby property owners and recreationists using the river and adjacent land near the project ESL could occur during the rehabilitation activities (i.e., 3 to 6 months for construction and up to 5 years for revegetation

efforts). However, no long-term impacts are anticipated, and the use of the land in the project ESL would be the same as under current conditions. The restored floodplain and habitats would enhance the area for recreationists and would maintain open space and scenic views near the private residences.

The Proposed Action is located in Trinity County, California, and would be consistent with Trinity County's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, which provides development standards for land in Trinity County, including areas located within the Trinity River floodplain. The BLM's Redding Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 1993) describes various objectives for resource conditions applicable to federal lands in the project ESL.

Short-term land-use impacts resulting from the Proposed Action would be minimal because of project design criteria that require maintenance of public and private access to the Trinity River, adjacent residents, and businesses. Additionally, project implementation would not prevent existing land uses from continuing or impede future land uses. Therefore, impacts on land use would be less than significant.

Noise

During the construction phase of the Proposed Action, noise from construction activities would temporarily dominate the noise environment in the project ESL. Construction noise would be temporary and would be expected to occur primarily between July and December; construction activities would be scheduled between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday to minimize potential noise impacts to area residences. During working hours, Reclamation would ensure that the contractor operates all equipment to minimize noise impacts to nearby sensitive receptors (residences adjacent to the project ESL, etc.). Therefore, noise impacts resulting from the implementation of the Proposed Action would be temporary and minimal.

Public Health and Safety

Hazards to the public were assessed in the Master EIR, and no issues were identified. Indirect public health or safety concerns are assessed in the Air Quality, Noise, Recreation, and Transportation and Traffic sections. Therefore, no direct or significant indirect impacts to public health and safety would result from the Proposed Action.

Public Services and Utilities/Energy

The Proposed Action would not disrupt electrical or telephone service within or adjacent to the project ESL. A project-specific traffic control plan, including traffic control associated with project activities, would be implemented. The Proposed Action is not expected to cause more than minimal, if any, disruptions to public services. However, access for mobilization and demobilization of heavy equipment may require a higher level of traffic control for local roadways and may disrupt traffic flow and circulation before, during, and after construction (see Transportation/Traffic Circulation below). Any disruptions to public services resulting from mobilization and demobilization of heavy equipment are expected to be minimal and of short duration.

Recreation

Construction activities could temporarily disrupt public access from Sky Ranch Road on river right and access to private lands on river left. However, river access and recreational opportunities would continue to be available at other locations along the river upstream (Evans Bar) and downstream (Sky Ranch). Potential disruptions and hazards to recreational activities within the project area would be temporary and minimal. Because construction of the Proposed Action (e.g., temporary crossings and associated equipment movement) could affect the safety of recreational users, signage would be employed to notify river users to be cautious of heavy equipment in the river corridor. Construction activities associated with

the Proposed Action could lower the Trinity River's aesthetic values for recreationists by increasing its turbidity; however, increases in turbidity are expected to be localized and of short duration.

Socioeconomics, Population, and Housing

The Proposed Action could directly generate short-term income growth through the payment of wages and salaries for individuals working on the project's construction but would result in little long-term increased economic activity. In addition, because of the limited size and duration of the project, impacts on socioeconomic conditions, population, or housing would be negligible.

Transportation/Traffic Circulation

Construction equipment and vehicles would temporarily increase traffic on local roads around the project ESL, primarily Dutch Creek Road and Evans Bar Road, and on SR 299, which provides access to the area from local communities and commercial fishing operations. Throughout the construction periods, the amount of daily construction equipment traffic would be limited by staging the construction equipment and vehicles within the project ESL boundary for the duration of work. The use of area roads by project-related trucks and heavy equipment would increase wear and tear on the local roadways. Traffic safety hazards could arise for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians in the vicinity of the construction access routes due to the movement of project-related trucks and heavy construction equipment. The contractor would be required to implement a traffic control plan to maximize public safety and maintain traffic flow during construction. With the inclusion of environmental commitments outlined in Appendix E, impacts on traffic and transportation would be minimal to moderate but would be temporary and less than significant.

Vegetation, Wildlife, and Wetlands including Forestry Resources

Construction activities associated with the Proposed Action would result in a temporary loss of riparian vegetation and waters of the United States. However, in the long term, floodplain function and riverine processes would be restored by revegetation of alluvial features, particularly floodplains. Upland features (i.e., terraces) would also be restored, primarily by converting old dredge tailing deposits into productive wildlife habitat. Overall, the Proposed Action would increase structural and species diversity and would speed reestablishment of native riparian and upland vegetation. Long-term changes in river inundation periods are expected to increase seasonal and perennial riparian habitats and offset impacts to wetlands and other waters. The project is designed to enhance the functions and services of the aquatic system, including wetlands and other waters.

The Proposed Action was planned to benefit riparian and upland habitat and function and has the potential to affect wildlife, including special-status wildlife species (designated BLM sensitive species and/or federally and state ESA-listed threatened and endangered species). Therefore, specific environmental commitments and project design features are included in the Proposed Action to ensure that activities occur in a manner that addresses potential impacts to special-status species, including avian and amphibian species.

No wildlife species listed under the ESA as threatened, endangered, or candidates for listing as threatened or endangered have been observed in the project area during project field surveys. In addition, the highly disturbed complex of dredge tailings deposits with isolated riparian and upland vegetation does not provide habitat for the northern spotted owl or other federally listed wildlife species potentially found in the area. Therefore, the project would not affect federally listed species.

The Proposed Action, including the environmental commitments and project design features listed in Chapter 2 and Appendix B combined with riparian revegetation measures, would ensure that the Proposed Action would not significantly impact vegetation, wildlife, and wetlands.

Water Resources and Quality

Implementation of the Proposed Action, including construction activities in and adjacent to the low-flow channel, could temporarily increase turbidity and total suspended solids in the water column. The project could also result in a spill of hazardous materials (e.g., grease, solvents) into the Trinity River.

Construction activities would be staged and timed to minimize potential water quality effects. Appropriate project design features, such as placing clean rock berms around work areas and isolating them from the river, would be implemented to avoid and reduce water quality impacts. Turbidity effects would be localized and short term, and the project would adhere to a water quality permit. The Spill Prevention Plan developed by the contractor would prevent hazardous material spillage. Therefore, impacts on water quality would be less than significant.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Secretary of the Interior designated the Trinity River as a National Wild and Scenic River in 1981. Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in a long-term benefit to the form and function of the Trinity River relative to the values that existed on the date of designation, thereby enhancing the Outstandingly Remarkable Values for which it was designated as a Wild and Scenic River, including its anadromous fishery. Implementation of the Proposed Action would alter the riverine environment; however, construction activities would not permanently affect the scenic or recreational values of the Trinity River for which it was designated.

SUMMARY

Implementation of the Proposed Action is expected to contribute to the Trinity River ecosystem's long-term environmental quality and sustainability with no significant adverse impacts on the environment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH 40 CFR 1501.6

After considering the environmental effects described for the Proposed Action in the Trinity River Channel Rehabilitation Site: Oregon Gulch (RM 80.9 to 81.7) EA/IS and project record, including information received during the 30-day public comment period which began January 18, 2021 and ended February 18, 2021, we have determined that implementation of the Proposed Action would not have significant environmental impacts, is in conformance with the BLM's RMP, and would not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, a supplemental EIS is not needed and will not be prepared.

Based on the documentation in the EA/IS and the project record, I find that the short- and long-term effects of the Proposed Action, with the incorporation of environmental commitments outlined in Appendix F of the EA/IS, as disclosed in the EA/IS are not significant with respect to the affected area and its resources, and would not violate Federal, State, Tribal, or local law or jeopardize public health and safety/welfare or environmental quality. Further, the effects of the Proposed Action, disclosed in Chapter 3, support the finding that it meets TRRP objectives established in the 2000 ROD and would be consistent with the 1993 Redding resource management plan for the BLM. The authority by which environmental commitments and mitigation measures are enforced lies with the co-lead NEPA agencies (the BLM and Reclamation), the California Environmental Quality Act lead agency (California North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board), and the permitting agencies (the Army Corps of Engineers, Trinity County, the State and Regional Water Boards).

The construction of the Proposed Action at the Oregon Gulch site is expected to provide localized improvements in aquatic and riparian habitats currently present at the site. The Proposed Action would

assist in meeting long-term needs to enhance fish habitat and provide properly functioning river conditions. Although effects considered included those adverse and beneficial, the finding is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.

Concerning public health and safety, standard Reclamation practices for notifying the public of activities involving the movement of heavy equipment would be implemented during construction activities. With regard to preventing violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment, the project implementation will meet requirements under the ROD, the ESA, the Clean Water Act, the Federal Land Protection and Management Act (FLPMA), NEPA, the Clean Air Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan, and BLM's RMP, as amended, for the Redding Field Office.

The Proposed Action described in this finding is consistent with BLM's RMP, the FLPMA, and the California Environmental Quality Act. The following permits are required to authorize the project:

- Section 404, Clean Water Act, Nationwide Permit 27 (San Francisco District, USACE);
- Section 401, Clean Water Act Water Quality Certification (Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region);
- Section 7, Endangered Species Act, 2020 Biological Opinion (NMFS);
- BLM Free Use Permit (FUP) to use mineral materials pursuant to 43 CFR 3604;
- BLM FUP to remove and use vegetation for site-specific rehabilitation activities pursuant to 43 CFR 5510;
- BLM Fee Permit for the removal of commercially viable trees pursuant to 43 CFR 5400;
- Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (State of California)
- Encroachment Permits (California Department of Trinity County); and
- Floodplain Development Permit (Trinity County).

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

The Proposed Action to implement the rehabilitation activities, including those specified under the jurisdiction of BLM, is consistent with the intent of the RMP for the Redding Field Office for resource management conditions.

Implementation Date

The proposed activities would take place in two phases. If fully funded, the first phase could transport up to 500,000 yards of material in approximately 1.5 years before in-stream channel rehabilitation work. Initial excavation and rock hauling (Phase 1) could begin as soon as the fall of 2021. Once the majority of excavation and transport of mine tailings has been completed, work would shift to in-channel restoration work. In-channel and floodplain work would most likely occur over one summer–fall period, although the in-channel schedule is also dependent on funding. Based only upon current TRRP funding levels, project work could continue through the summer of 2026

In any year, all in-channel rehabilitation work must be performed between July 15 and October 15. Revegetation would occur during construction and in the fall and winter months following construction; seeding would primarily be used in the uplands, and cuttings or plants would be used in riparian areas. Irrigation and vegetation maintenance may take place for 3 to 5 years post-construction or potentially through fall 2028.

Contact

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