Finding of No Significant Impact

Minidoka Boat Ramp Replacement

Bureau of Reclamation

PN FONSI 17-03

Introduction

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to comply with the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This document briefly describes the proposed action, other alternatives considered, the scoping process, Reclamation's consultation and coordination activities, mitigation and Reclamation's finding. The Final Environmental Assessment (EA) fully documents the analyses of the potential environmental impacts of implementing the changes proposed.

Reclamation has reviewed the Minidoka Boat Ramp Replacement Environmental Assessment document for compliance with Reclamation's NEPA procedures. All NEPA requirements are met through the inclusion of additional sufficient analysis on Indian Trust Assets (ITAs), sacred sites, cultural resources, Environmental Justice, and climate change in the Final EA.

The Minidoka boat ramp is located about 0.25 miles downstream from the Minidoka Dam along the north bank of the Snake River in Minidoka County, Idaho. The ramp is located along the north bank of the Snake River at the following location:

Township 9 South, Range 25 East, NW1/4 Section 1, Boise Meridian, Minidoka County, Idaho. (Final EA Figure 1-1).

Purpose and Need

The Minidoka Boat Ramp is used by Reclamation personnel, the general public, Minidoka County Sheriff Marine Patrol, and search and rescue personnel. Reclamation's need for action is the existing ramp is steep and the surface is uneven and poorly drained. Poor ramp conditions have resulted in vehicles sliding into the reservoir, subsequently requiring retrieval. Additionally, current ramp conditions and site configuration do not comply with respective access and accessibility laws and regulations.

The nearest alternate boat ramp is over 11 river miles downstream near I-86. Therefore, Reclamation needs to replace the existing boat ramp, and associated facilities, with a new ramp suitable for safe access and egress from the river as well as meeting compliance standards set forth in the Architectural Barriers Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Public Law 89-72. Reclamation's purpose is to provide safe access for the public and emergency responders at this location.

Alternatives Considered and Recommended Action

The proposed alternatives were developed to meet the purpose and need of the project. The range of developed alternatives includes an alternative that considers the excavation and reconstruction of the Minidoka boat ramp to meet current safety standards. A no-action alternative is also evaluated because it provides an appropriate basis by which all other alternatives are compared.

Alternative A is the No Action Alternative in which the proposed Minidoka boat ramp would not be excavated and reconstructed. Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would close the boat ramp to all users except for emergency use. The proposed excavation and reconstruction of the boat ramp and updating the facilities to modern standards or meeting accessibility standards would not occur. If the boat ramp is not replaced, it would continue to deteriorate and the asset would be lost in the river. Public access to the river would no longer be provided at that location.

Under Alternative B, Reclamation is proposing to excavate and replace the existing boat ramp to meet current safety standards. Ancillary facilities would be brought up to modern and accessible standards by reconfiguration and construction of the boat parking area, and completion of accessible parking and the route to the restroom.

As part of the proposed project, Reclamation would design a new boat ramp that would be safer and more reliable than the existing ramp. The new design would reduce the slope of the ramp by extending it into the parking lot, as opposed to extending the ramp into the river. The river at this location contains a large eddy that is not an ideal location for the ramp due to the presence of a large sand bar and multiple large rocks. The ramp is currently on the edge of this eddy. Extending the ramp into the eddy would place users closer to the sand bar and the large rocks. To offset the loss of parking spaces resulting from extending the ramp further into the parking lot, additional parking spaces will be added. Although the slope will be reduced, the overall footprint of the boat ramp in the river bed would not change.

All construction activities will be conducted in the dry, during the annual low-flow period (generally October 15 – March 31). On-site work is anticipated to take approximately 2 months. Once excavation is complete, the site would be cleaned of any debris and the area contoured to match the existing shoreline. The project area is bisected by the facility access roadway leading to the Minidoka Dam main entrance gate. Total disturbance area associated with this replacement project is expected to be approximately 0.75 acres.

Summary of Environmental Effects

The Proposed Action would not cause any short-term impact to any biological resources, threatened and endangered species, hydrology and hydraulics, cultural resources, Indian sacred sites, Indian trust assets, socioeconomics, environmental justice, and climate change due to the short duration of construction and small area of impact. There could be displacement of local terrestrial and aquatic animals temporarily. There would also be no additional long-term adverse effect on the above mentioned resources. For a full analysis and explanation on each resource's

evaluation, please reference Chapter 3- Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences in the EA.

Recreation

The construction zone closure would temporarily stop public access to the parking area, boat ramp, and restroom. Reclamation would close the boat ramp to all users except for emergency use. The Public will experience short-term decreases in the choices of recreation activity and the quality of recreation experiences due to construction-related impacts such as noise, dust, construction traffic, and temporary displacement of aquatic or terrestrial species that are normally present. All travel between 300 North Road and the dam facility would likely be restricted to Reclamation and construction workers until construction is complete. The road is used to access the boat ramp and Minidoka dam and will not impede on any surrounding recreational opportunities or access.

Cumulative Impacts

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future impacts identified in the area (public or private) that would adversely affect the same resource area evaluated in this EA would be additive effects to the proposed project. Actions considered for cumulative impacts are the maintenance to the shoreline to address erosion and foreseeable future projects at Minidoka Dam. Minidoka Unit 7 Draft Tube Gate Replacement and Powerhouse Sluice Gate Plugs at Minidoka Power Plant is a foreseeable future project near the Minidoka boat ramp. The project will include dewatering a portion of the Minidoka Power Plant Stilling Basin by setting a temporary cofferdam immediately adjacent to the draft tube to be replaced. No effects from this project will impact the Minidoka boat ramp replacement due to the difference in timing for construction of each project.

It has been determined through the evaluation of each resource that biological resources, threatened and endangered species, hydrology and hydraulics, cultural resources, Indian sacred sites, Indian trust assets, socioeconomics, environmental justice, and climate change will not be affected by cumulative impacts. However, there will be a positive cumulative impact on recreational activities. Long-term impacts to recreational activities, safety and user experience at this popular location on the north side of the river would be improved by providing facilities that meet current safety and accessibility standards.

Environmental Commitments & Mitigation

Signs would be posted during construction with maps showing the availability of recreation opportunity alternatives outside the construction zone.

Consultation, Coordination, and Public Involvement

Reclamation initiated consultation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office in October of 2016 (Appendix A). On December 20, 2016 Reclamation received concurrence from the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office on its finding of no historic properties affected for this project. Reclamation mailed scoping letters to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and Shoshone-

Paiute Tribes on November 22, 2016 (Appendix C and D). No response or concerns from the Tribes were brought forward during the scoping period. Reclamation also mailed consultation letters to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes on December 2, 2016. No response was received.

Finding

Based on the analysis of the environmental impacts presented in the Final EA and consultation with potentially affected agencies, tribes, organizations and the general public, Reclamation concludes that implementation of the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment or natural and cultural resources. The effects of the proposed action will be minor and localized. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

Decision

Based on the analysis in the Minidoka Boat Ramp Replacement Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to select for implementation the Proposed Action (Alternative B). The Proposed Action will best meet the Purpose and Need identified in the EA.

Recommended:

Rochelle Ochoa — 3/3/17

Rochelle Ochoa — Date

Natural Resources Specialist

Snake River Area Office, Boise, Idaho

Approved:

3/3/17

Roland K. Springer — Date

Snake River Area Manager

Pacific Northwest Region, Boise, Idaho

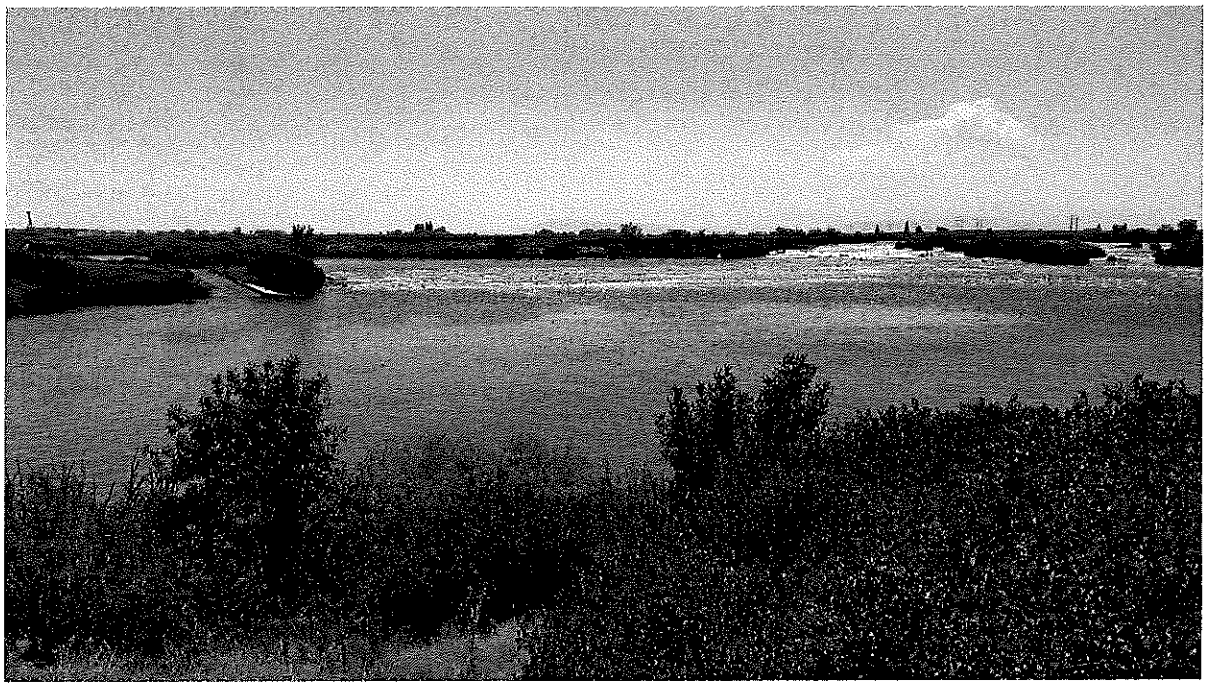
RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Final Environmental Assessment

Minidoka Boat Ramp Replacement

Minidoka County, Idaho



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Pacific Northwest Region
Snake River Area Office
Boise, Idaho

January 2017

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to Indian tribes and our commitments to island communities.

MISSION OF THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

Cover Photograph: View looking to the southeast from 300N road at the existing boat ramp, eddy pool, and spillway channels.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

APE	Area of Potential Impact
BP	Before the Present
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
cfs	cubic feet per second
CIG	Climate Impacts Group
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
IDFG	Idaho Department of Fish and Game
IDL	Idaho Department of Labor
IPaC	Information for Planning and Conservation
ITAs	Indian Trust Assets
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOAA Fisheries	National Marine Fisheries Service
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
RMP	Resource Management Plan
T&E	Threatened and Endangered
USCB	United States Census Bureau
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

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Chapter 1. Purpose and Need

1.1. Introduction

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This EA summarizes a Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposal to excavate and replace the existing Minidoka Boat Ramp, reconfigure the parking area, and provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible parking and route to the existing restroom located on the Snake River approximately 0.25 miles below the Minidoka Dam. The ramp is located along the north bank of the Snake River at the following location:
Township 9 South, Range 25 East, NW1/4 Section 1, Boise Meridian, Minidoka County, Idaho. (Figure 1-1)

1.2. Purpose and Need for Action

The Minidoka Boat Ramp is used by Reclamation personnel, the general public, Minidoka County Sheriff Marine Patrol, and search and rescue personnel. Reclamation's need for action is the existing ramp is steep and the surface is uneven and poorly drained. Poor ramp conditions have resulted in vehicles sliding into the reservoir, subsequently requiring retrieval. Additionally, current ramp conditions and site configuration do not comply with respective access and accessibility laws and regulations.

The nearest alternate boat ramp is over 11 river miles downstream near I-86. Therefore, Reclamation needs to replace the existing boat ramp, and associated facilities, with a new ramp suitable for safe access and egress from the river as well as meeting compliance standards set forth in the Architectural Barriers Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Public Law 89-72. Reclamation's purpose is to provide safe access for the public and emergency responders at this location.

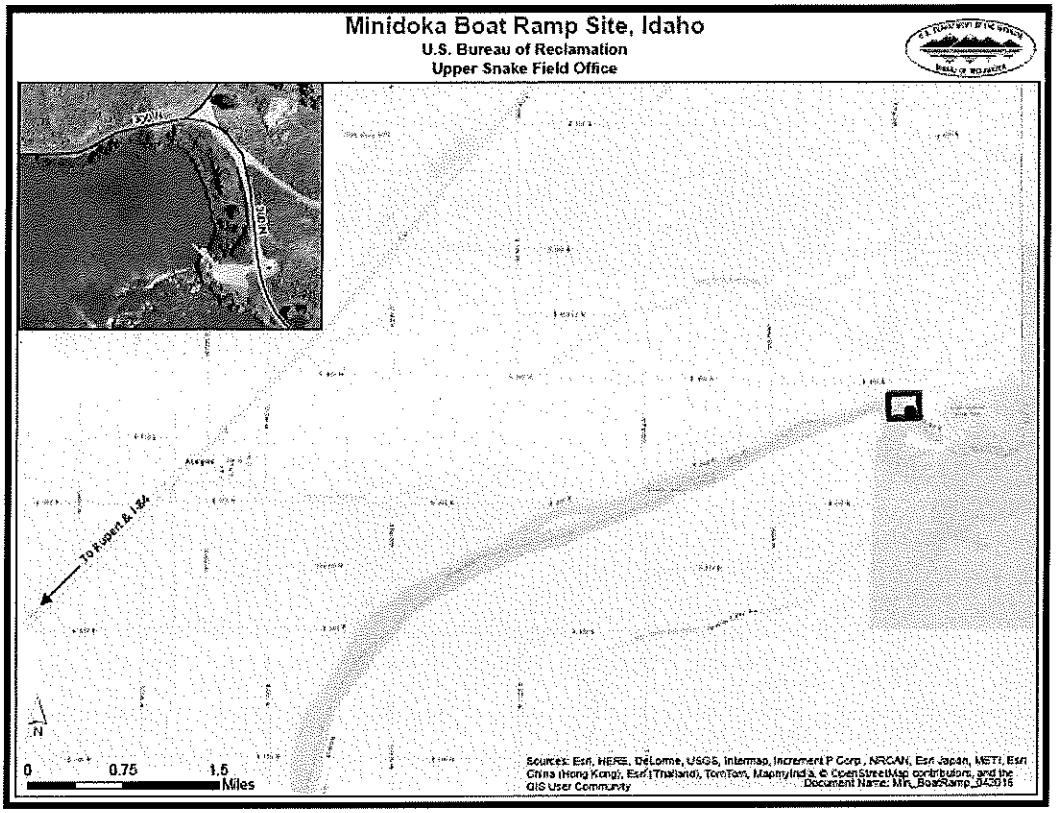


Figure 1-1. General location of current boat ramp and ancillary facilities below Minidoka Dam.

1.3. Legal Authority

The Minidoka Project was authorized under the Reclamation Act of 1902 on June 17, 1902, as amended and supplemented (Minidoka, American Falls, Jackson Lake, Island Park and Grassy Lake Dams); P.L. 111-11, Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, March 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1348, Sec. 9603. The authority to maintain minimum basic recreation facilities and provide for such is under P.L. 89-72, July 9, 1965, 79 stat. 213, 214 as amended by: P.L 93-251, March 7, 1974, 88 stat. 33, sec. 77 and P.L. 102-575, October 30, 1992, 106 stat. 4690, Title XXVIII.

1.4. Regulatory Compliance

The following section contains a summary of the major laws, executive orders, and secretarial orders that apply to the proposed action.

1.4.1. National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires an agency to fully disclose potential effects/impacts of its proposed action on the environment and possible mitigation measures. This evaluation is documented and presented to the public. This is being done as an EA for

this project. If, following public scoping and alternative evaluation, no significant impacts to the human environment are identified, then a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be prepared and signed. However, if significant impacts that cannot be mitigated or eliminated are identified through the EA process, Reclamation will prepare a notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the project. A record of decision (ROD) would be issued following completion of a Final EIS

1.4.2. Paleontological Resources Preservation Act (2009)

The Paleontological Resources Preservation Act became law when the Omnibus Public Land Management Act was signed in 2009. The Act states that the Secretary of Interior and Secretary of Agriculture shall manage and protect paleontological resources on Federal land using scientific principles and expertise. The Secretary shall develop appropriate plans for inventory, monitoring, and the scientific and educational use of paleontological resources, in accordance with applicable agency laws, regulations, and policies. These plans shall emphasize interagency coordination and collaborative efforts with non-Federal partners, the scientific community, and the public, where possible.

1.4.3. Endangered Species Act (1973)

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to use their legal authorities to promote the conservation purposes of the Endangered Species Act and to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), as appropriate, to ensure that effects of actions they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species, or destroy or adversely modify their critical habitat. In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, an agency must request information from the USFWS and the NOAA Fisheries about whether any threatened and endangered species occur within or near the action area. The agency then must evaluate impacts to those species. If it is determined the action may adversely affect any ESA-listed species or their habitat, the agency must consult with USFWS and/or NOAA.

1.4.4. National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, requires that Federal agencies consider the effects that their projects have on properties eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 800 regulations provide procedures that Federal agencies must follow to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act. For any undertaking, Federal agencies must determine if there are properties of National Register of Historic Places quality in the project area, the effects of the project on those properties, and the appropriate mitigation for adverse effects. In making these determinations, Federal agencies are required to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office, Native American Tribes with a traditional or culturally

significant religious interest in the project area, the interested public, and in certain cases, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

1.4.5. Executive Order 13007: Indian Sacred Sites

Executive Order (EO) 13007, dated May 24, 1996, instructs Federal agencies to promote accommodation of access to and protect the physical integrity of American Indian sacred sites. A sacred site is a specific, discrete, and narrowly delineated location on Federal land. An Indian Tribe or an Indian individual determined to be an appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion must identify a site as sacred by virtue of its established religious significance to, or ceremonial use by, an Indian religion. However, this is provided that the Tribe or authoritative representative has informed the agency of the existence of such a site.

1.4.6. Secretarial Order 3175: Department Responsibilities for Indian Trust Assets

Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) are legal interests in property held in trust by the United States (with the Secretary of the Interior acting as trustee) for Indian Tribes or Indian individuals. Examples of ITAs are lands, minerals, hunting and fishing rights, and water rights. In many cases, ITAs are on-reservation; however, they may also be found off-reservation.

The United States has an Indian trust responsibility to protect and maintain rights reserved by or granted to Indian Tribes or Indian individuals by treaties, statutes, and EOs. These rights are sometimes further interpreted through court decisions and regulations. This trust responsibility requires that officials from Federal agencies, including Reclamation, take all actions reasonably necessary to protect ITAs when administering programs under their control.

1.4.7. Executive Order 12898: Environmental Justice

EO 12898, dated February 11, 1994, instructs Federal agencies, to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low income populations. Environmental justice means the fair treatment of people of all races, income, and cultures with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment implies that no person or group of people should shoulder a disproportionate share of negative environmental impacts resulting from the execution of Federal agency programs, policies, and activities.

Chapter 2. Alternatives

2.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the alternatives analyzed in this EA, the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action.

2.2. Alternative Development

The alternatives presented in this chapter were based on the purpose and need for the project, as described in Chapter 1, and the issues developed during internal and tribal scoping. The range of developed alternatives include the proposed excavation and reconstruction of the Minidoka Boat Ramp and ancillary facilities to meet modern design, safety, and accessibility standards. A no action alternative is also evaluated because it provides an appropriate basis by which the other alternative is compared.

2.3. Description of Alternatives

2.3.1. Alternative A – No Action

Alternative A is the No Action Alternative in which the proposed Minidoka boat ramp would not be excavated and reconstructed. Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would close the boat ramp to all users except for emergency use. The proposed excavation and reconstruction of the boat ramp and updating the facilities to modern standards or meeting accessibility standards would not occur. If the boat ramp is not replaced, it would continue to deteriorate and would eventually be closed to all use and ultimately removed. Public access to the river would no longer be provided at that location.

2.3.2. Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, Reclamation is proposing to excavate and replace the existing boat ramp to meet current safety standards. Ancillary facilities would be brought up to modern and accessibility standards by reconfiguration and construction of the boat parking area, and completion of accessible parking and route to the restroom.

As part of the proposed project, Reclamation would design a new boat ramp that would be safer and more reliable than the existing ramp. The new design would reduce the slope of the ramp by extending it into the parking lot, as opposed to extending the ramp into the river. The river at this location contains a large eddy that is not an ideal location for the ramp due to the presence of a large sand bar and multiple large rocks. The ramp is currently on the edge of this eddy. Extending the ramp into the eddy would place users closer to the sand bar and the large rocks. To offset the loss of parking spaces resulting from extending the ramp further into the parking lot, additional parking spaces will be added. Although the slope will be reduced, the overall footprint of the boat ramp in the river bed would not change.

All construction activities will be conducted in the dry, during the annual low-flow period (generally October 15 – March 31). On-site work is anticipated to take approximately 2 months. Once excavation is complete, the site would be cleaned of any debris and the area contoured to match the existing shoreline. The project area is bisected by the facility access roadway leading to the Minidoka Dam main entrance gate. Total disturbance area associated with this replacement project is expected to be approximately 0.75 acres.

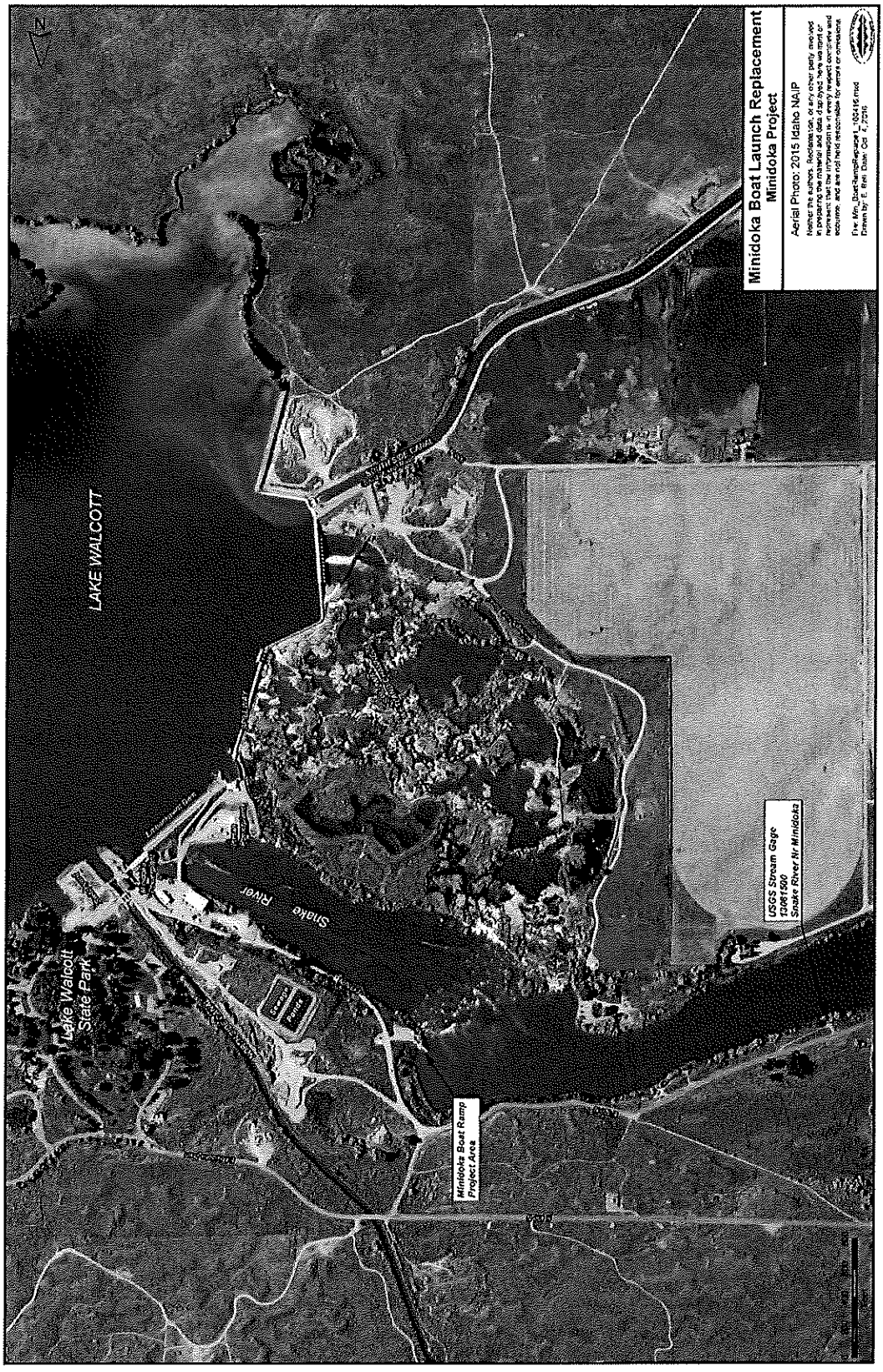


Figure 2-1. Map of proposed Minidoka Boat Launch Replacement project.

2.4. Alternatives Eliminated from Consideration

Resurfacing the existing boat ramp corrects the surface degradation issues associated with the ramp; however, it was determined to be ineffective in correcting the slope and drainage issues.

2.5. Summary Comparison of the Environmental Impacts of the Alternatives

The environmental impacts of Alternative A – No Action and Alternative B – Proposed Action are compared in Table 2-1. Potential short- and long-term, direct and indirect impacts of the alternatives are summarized. The environmental consequences of the alternatives arranged by resource are described in detail in Chapter 3. The terms "environmental consequences" and "environmental impacts" are synonymous in this document.

Table 2-1. Summary of environmental impacts of actions.

Resource	Alternative A: No Action	Alternative B: Proposed Action
Biological Resources	Current conditions would continue under Alternative A. There would be no short-term impacts to any biological resources. There would also be no additional long-term adverse effects on biological resources resulting from Alternative A other than those that occur under existing conditions.	The Proposed Action would not cause any significant impacts to any biological resources due to the timing, short duration and small area of impact. Temporary displacement of wildlife would likely occur during the construction period. No long-term adverse effects on biological resources are anticipated.
Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species	Current conditions would continue under Alternative A. There would be no short-term impacts to any T&E species associated with construction. There would also be no additional long-term adverse effects on T&E resources resulting	With no Snake River physa encountered during a survey of the proposed construction area, as well as construction occurring outside of the time frame Yellow-billed Cuckoo could be present in Idaho, no effects to ESA-listed species are anticipated.

Resource	Alternative A: No Action	Alternative B: Proposed Action
	from Alternative A other than those that occur under existing conditions.	
Hydrology	Under the No Action Alternative, the existing boat ramp would continue to deteriorate, directly causing increased bank erosion in the project area. Indirectly, as the existing ramp becomes unusable, use of unimproved boat launching areas will increase, also causing erosion and damage to the river bank at those locations.	Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the existing boat ramp would be improved, and sufficient bank stabilization would be placed to minimize the effects of erosion at the project location in the long-term. The new ramp would also deter the use of unimproved boat launching areas, indirectly minimizing bank erosion at those locations.
Cultural Resources	As no features of the Minidoka Dam and Power Plant Site have been identified within the Area of Potential Impact (APE), there would be no direct or indirect impacts on historic properties.	As no features of the Minidoka Dam and Power Plant Site been identified within the APE, there would be no direct or indirect impacts on historic properties.
Indian Sacred Sites	No Indian Sacred Sites have been identified within the proposed APE and the project would result in no direct or indirect impacts to Indian Sacred Sites.	No Indian Sacred Sites have been identified within the proposed APE and the project would result in no direct or indirect impacts to Indian Sacred Sites.
Indian Trust Assets	Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to ITAs. The proposed ramp would	Alternative B would not affect any known ITAs of land, minerals, water rights, monetary holdings, and gathering rights in the direct

Resource	Alternative A: No Action	Alternative B: Proposed Action
	not be repaired and would remain as is, leading to deterioration and inaccessibility.	vicinity. As part of the scoping process, Reclamation requested information from Tribes that traditionally and currently use the area. However, no responses were received. The lack of specific information about the area is not indicative of a lack of importance to Tribes.
Socioeconomics	Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed boat ramp improvement would not be approved. The existing conditions of the ramp would worsen over time with continued use. However, the socioeconomic climate would not be affected by this lack of action.	Under the Proposed Action Alternative, repair and replacement of the boat ramp would bring short-term, minor economic gains in the local areas. The repairs would allow easier access to the area, but would not affect the socioeconomic climate as a result. No changes are expected to the ethnographic demographics due to effects from the proposed project.
Environmental Justice	The No Action Alternative would not alter the current regional environmental justice status based on the presented information above, and therefore would cause no environmental justice impacts.	The Proposed Action Alternative has been reviewed through census data and application of the EJSCREEN tool. No minority or low-income groups, as defined by EO 12898, would be disproportionately affected by health or environmental effects as the results of the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative.

Resource	Alternative A: No Action	Alternative B: Proposed Action
Recreation	Under the No Action Alternative, the ramp and associated parking area would remain closed to the recreating public indefinitely, thereby continuing to have an adverse impact to local recreational activities. Reclamation would continue to only allow emergency use until such time the ramp is unusable. At this point it would be removed and the site restored to natural conditions.	The construction zone closure would temporarily stop public access to the parking area, boat ramp, and restroom. The public will experience short-term losses of the choices of recreation activity, and the quality of recreation experiences due to construction-related impacts such as noise, dust, construction traffic, and temporary displacement of aquatic or terrestrial species that are normally present. During construction, all travel between the 300 North Road and the dam facility would likely be restricted to Reclamation and construction workers.
Climate Change	The proposed construction would not occur and the existing conditions would remain, which would lead to deterioration and loss of the site, which will have no effect on climate change. Effects of climate change on the project areas would happen regardless of any action.	The proposed action is not likely to have any effects (long- or short-term) on climate change. Effects of climate change on the project areas are the same as those identified in the No Action Alternative.

Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

The scope of this EA is defined by the Proposed Action as compared with the No Action Alternative. Analysis is focused on identifying and evaluating potential environmental impacts resulting specifically from the Proposed Action detailed in Chapter 2. The affected environment (proposed action area) addressed in this EA includes 0.75 acres of land on the north bank of the Snake River 0.25 miles downstream from Minidoka Dam.

NEPA requires analysis only of resource categories or issues in which there is or could be potential for adverse impact from the Proposed Action. Consideration of some of these items is to ensure compliance with laws, statues, or executive orders that impact federal actions. Other items are relevant to the management of public lands in general. This chapter does not contain comprehensive discussions of every resource, but focuses on issues that were identified during scoping, or that might be affected by the alternatives being considered.

Cumulative impacts will also be assessed for each resource. Many times, a project would have some degree of effect upon a resource or concern, but the effect does not approach any threshold of significance, nor does it increase cumulative impacts by a measureable increment. Such effects are described in the rationale for dismissal from analysis.

The resources analyzed in this EA include the following:

- Biological Resources
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Hydrology
- Cultural Resources
- Indian Sacred Sites
- Indian Trust Assets
- Socioeconomics
- Environmental Justice
- Recreation
- Climate Change

3.1. Biological Resources

Vegetation, Aquatic, and Wildlife Resources

3.1.1. Affected Environment

The analysis area includes Reclamation land located at the current Minidoka boat ramp site approximately 0.25 mile below Minidoka Dam.

3.1.1.1. Vegetation

The dominant terrestrial vegetation cover types within the project area are big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), Cottonwood (*Populus*), native bunch grasses and forbs, along with non-native Cheatgrass (*Bromus tetorum*). Martin and Meuleman (1989) and Meuleman (1991) describe the riparian habitat as deciduous scrub-shrub wetland. Shrub species (usually less than 3 feet) present include skunkbush sumac (*Rhus trilobata)*, Wood's rose (*Rosa woodsii*), and golden currant (*Ribes aureum*). Mid-sized species (less than 10 feet) present include primarily coyote willow (*Salix exigua*) with some skunkbush sumac. Taller species include eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), peachleaf (*Salix amygdaloides*) and Pacific willows (*Salix lucida*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), and Chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*). There are a few areas with sizable patches of riparian habitat, but, for the most part, the riparian zone is narrow and linear—in most places only one tree wide where it goes from open water to basalt rock in only a few feet. Nevertheless, the riparian zone is quite important to some songbird species, such as Bullock's orioles (*Icterus bullockii*). The oriole territories include a couple hundred feet of shoreline with trees for nesting, but much of their foraging is in the adjacent sagebrush.

The primary threat to the riparian zone is invasive weeds. Some of the riparian habitat is degraded by Russian olive, which is an invasive weed in this area. Also, the riparian zone has been degraded by several other invasive weeds, primarily Canada thistle (*Cirsuum arvense*), Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*), and poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). Other species in the proposed action area that are difficult to control are perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*), hoary cress (*Lepidium draba*), and Russian (*Acroptilon*) and diffuse knapweeds (*Centaurea maculosa*). These weeds grow primarily in herbaceous riparian areas, but can grow under trees also.

3.1.1.2. Aquatic Resources

The project area (Bishop's Hole) and the spillway area immediately downstream of Minidoka Dam have become an important fishery resource. Flows from the reservoir provide for vigorous growth of algae and aquatic invertebrates. The abundant food source of aquatic insects enhances the area's fish populations and sustains a valuable fishery (USFWS 1989). Many of the trout in the spillway area grow to be trophy-size, ranging from 2 to 6 pounds (IDFG 2007b). The trout fishery in the river below the dam is maintained primarily by hatchery fish planted each year in the reservoir.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) (2007a) conducted a fish survey below Minidoka Dam in September 2007. Habitats sampled included riffle, pool, run, and isolated pool. Fish species detected below the dam and spillway area included common carp, dace species, rainbow trout, redside shiner, sculpin species, smallmouth bass, Utah chub, sucker

species, and yellow perch. The dominant species detected was smallmouth bass, collected at 91 percent of the sampled locations. Redside shiner, rainbow trout, and yellow perch were sampled at 50 percent, 41 percent, and 41 percent of sampled sites, respectively.

3.1.1.3. Wildlife Resources

The project area is on lands withdrawn by Reclamation. The Minidoka Wildlife Refuge extends upstream approximately 25 miles from Minidoka Dam along both shores of the Snake River, encompassing a total of 20,699 acres, of which 11,300 acres are the open water of Lake Walcott, the Snake River, and some small marsh areas. Minidoka Refuge has been designated as an Important Bird Area of global importance for its colonial nesting bird populations and for the numbers of molting waterfowl. The Important Bird Area Program identifies areas that have high value for birds throughout the world. In the United States, this program is coordinated by the National Audubon Society.

Birds

The Minidoka Refuge bird lists (USFWS 1989; 2002) indicate that the waterfowl species most likely to use proposed project area wetlands and nearby grain fields include mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), gadwalls (*A. strepera*), and cinnamon teal (*A. cyanoptera*). Fewer numbers of redheads (*Aythya americana*), ruddy ducks (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), pintails (*Anasacuta*), American wigeon (*Anas americana*), and northern shovelers (*Anas clypeata*) breed in the refuge area and may occasionally use drain water wetlands. Wintering waterfowl include Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*), mallards, pintails, gadwalls, American wigeon, northern shovelers, and green-winged teal (*Anas crecca*). Tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) forage in grain fields near the project area in relatively low numbers during migration.

Great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*), American avocets (*Recurvirosta americana*), long-billed curlews (*Numenius americanus*), killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*), and other shorebirds would also be expected to use the larger wetlands, as would red-winged blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceous*). In addition, white pelicans (*Pelicanus erythrohynchus*), grebes (*Podicipedidae*), Sabines gull (*Xema sabini*), and several other species of gulls use the area just below the dam during the summer.

Mammals

Big game species on the proposed project area include a few mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and very rarely pronghorn (*Antilocarpa americana*). Some mule deer are resident and some are migrant. In recent years, the number of migrant mule deer has increased to a few hundred deer during severe winters. Fires occurring north of the proposed project area have destroyed winter range, apparently forcing mule deer south onto the Minidoka North Side area (USFWS 1985). The loss of native shrublands from fire and past conversion to agriculture has reduced and degraded mule deer winter range, resulting in increased depredations on private lands (USFWS 1985; Reclamation 1996).

Large fur-bearing mammals occurring in upland parts of the proposed project area include coyote (*Canis latrans*), red fox (*Vulves vulpes*), badger (*Taxidea taxus*), and striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*). Raccoons (*Procyo lotor*), muskrats (*Ondatra zibethica*), long-tailed weasels (*Mustela frenata*), and mink (*Mustela vison*) occur below the existing spillway and around the reservoir shoreline and wetlands. Small mammals common to the area include black-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*), montane voles (*Microtus montanus*), and deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*).

Pygmy rabbits have also been surveyed for presence in the proposed action area by the USFWS. According to USFWS survey records, pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) have never been detected within or near the proposed action area (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

Amphibians and Reptiles

Amphibians and reptiles expected to occur in the proposed action area include long-toed salamanders (*Ambystoma macrodactylum*), pacific treefrogs (*Hyla regilla*), leopard frogs (*Rana pipiens*), western chorus frogs (*Pseudacris triseriata*), longnose leopard lizards (*Gambelia wislizenii*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), racers (*Coluber constrictor*), gopher snakes (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), garter snakes (*Thamnophis spp.*), and western rattlesnakes (*Crotalus viridis*).

3.1.2. Environmental Consequences

Alternative A – No Action

Current conditions would continue under Alternative A. There would be no significant impacts to any biological resources. There would also be no additional long-term adverse effects on biological resources resulting from Alternative A, other than those that occur under existing conditions.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would not cause any short-term impact to any biological resources due to the short duration of construction and small, localized area of impact. There may be temporary displacement of some wildlife during the construction period, however no long-term adverse effects on biological resources are anticipated.

3.2. Threatened and Endangered Species

3.2.1. Affected Environment

The area of impact is located within Minidoka County. The primary sources of information for this analysis include USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) information (http://www.ecos.fws.gov) (see Appendix B), and a site visit conducted on August 26, 2016. Species that are known or expected to occur in the area of impact, or that occur near the area of impact, are the Snake River physa (*Physa natricina*) and Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*).

3.2.1.1. Yellow-billed Cuckoo

The western Yellow-billed Cuckoo is known to nest and rear young almost exclusively in low to moderate elevation stands of dense riparian vegetation within arid to semiarid landscapes, making this species an obligate riparian nester. Preferred nesting habitat stands occur in broad floodplains along rivers and in areas where rivers and streams enter impoundments, and most often consist of mature cottonwood, willow-cottonwood, or mesquite forest. Suitable nesting habitat features a dense understory, dense canopy closure, high foliage volume, and sufficient humidity. Nesting pairs require a 50 acre (20 ha) minimum patch size of prime riparian habitat; smaller patches are rarely occupied (Hughes 1999).

The habitat in the immediate area of the boat ramp is not suitable for nesting. The closest critical habitat is found at the upstream end of American Falls Reservoir, 46 miles away from the boat ramp. The western Yellow-billed Cuckoo is a neotropical migrant and is only present in Idaho from June through September. Construction would occur during the low-water period either in early spring or the fall, outside of the period Yellow-billed Cuckoo's would be present.

3.2.1.2. Snake River physa

Gates and Kerans' (2010, pp. 8–36) detailed study sampled cross sections of the river profile, and characterized Snake River physa habitat as occurring in runs, glides, or pools, with moderate mean water velocity of 0.57 meters/second (m/s). Snake River physa have been collected on substrates from pebble through bedrock (Gates and Kerans 2010; Taylor *in litt.* 1982; Winslow *et al.* 2011 *as cited in* USFWS 2016).

This project is occurring in a backwater area of the Snake River with relatively low velocities and mostly fine grained substrate (Prisciandaro 2016, pers. obs.). Suction dredge sampling for snails was conducted at 18 sites in the proposed project area by a private contractor on August 26, 2016 (Figure 3-1). No live Snake River physa were collected during this sampling event and only one Snake River physa shell was collected. The shell likely drifted downstream from more suitable habitat. With no live snails being found during the surveys near the project footprint, it is not expected that the project will directly impact Snake River physa. There is an active population of Snake River physa downstream of the project area.

3.2.2. Environmental Consequences

Alternative A – No Action

Current conditions would continue under Alternative A. There would be no short-term impacts to any T&E species. There would also be no additional long-term adverse effects on T&E resources resulting from Alternative A other than those that occur under existing conditions.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

No Snake River physa were encountered during a survey of the proposed construction area, most likely due to this habitat being unsuitable for the species. The project is occurring in a backwater area of the Snake River with relatively low velocities and mostly fine grained substrate. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used to limit downstream transport of fine sediment. Any sediment that is released will be limited and should not impact any Snake River physa downstream of the construction site. Construction occurring outside of the time frame Yellow-billed Cuckoo could be present in Idaho and the habitat in the immediate area of the boat ramp not fitting for nesting makes this habitat unsuitable for the species. Due to these factors, there are no expected impacts of the Alternative B on endangered species.

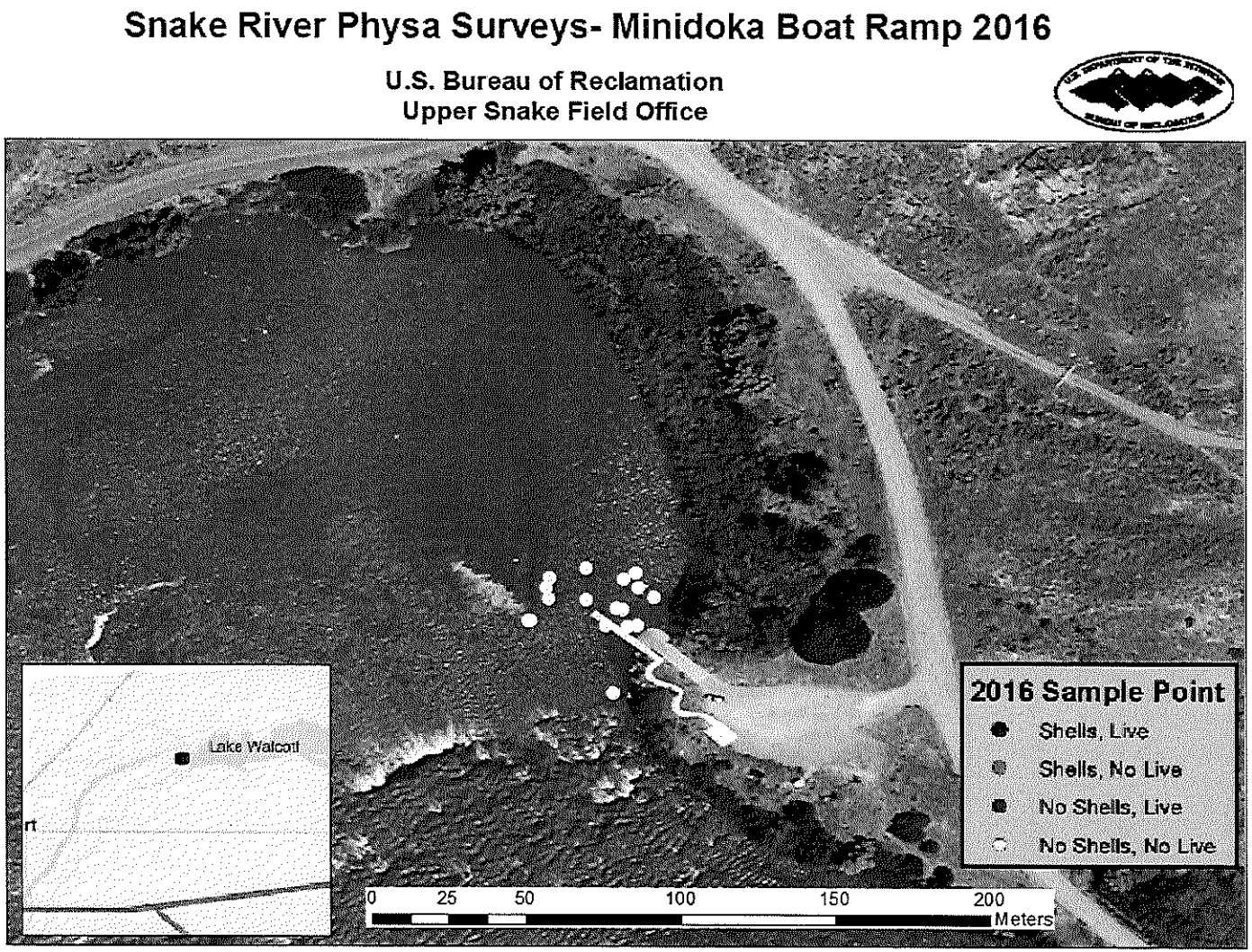
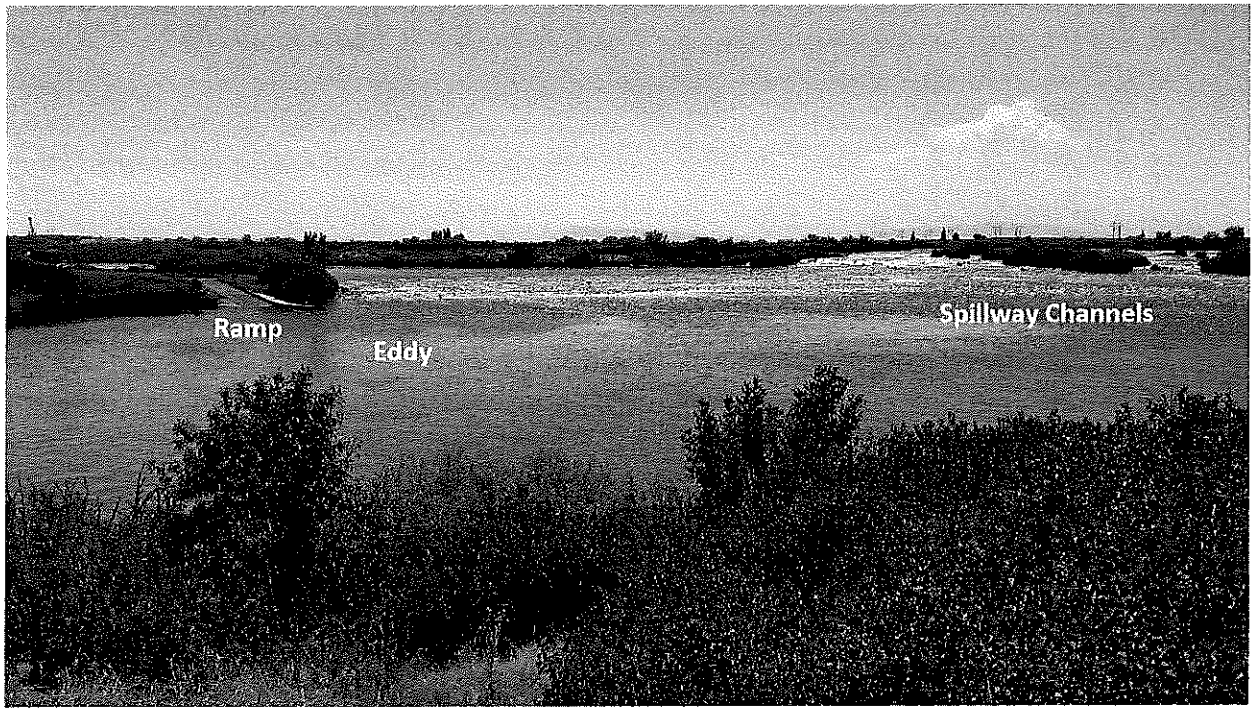


Figure 3-1. Map showing the 18 sites where suction dredge sampling for Snake River Physa snails was conducted in the proposed project area. Sampling was conducted by a private contractor on August 26, 2016.

3.3. Hydrology & Hydraulics

3.3.1. Affected Environment

Discharge from Minidoka Dam flows into the Snake River through two hydropower facilities located at either end of the maximum section of the embankment dam and/or through a recently renovated spillway located on the south bank. The hydropower facilities discharge into the original river channel. After more than 100 years of operation, the historical upland area below the spillway formed numerous channels that flow across fractured basalt through pools and wetlands downstream of the spillway. The spillway flows enter the river downstream of the Inman Powerplant tailrace directly across from the boat ramp project, about 0.25 mile downstream from the dam. At this location, a basalt shelf forms a drop in the river channel and an eddy pool along the north edge of the river, creating an ideal location for a boat ramp located away from the main current of the river. The existing boat ramp is located on the edge of this eddy pool. Photograph 3-1 shows the existing boat ramp, eddy pool, and spillway channels.



Photograph 3-1. View looking to the southeast from 300N road showing the existing boat ramp, eddy pool, and spillway channels.

Aerial imagery indicates the eddy pool exists even during very low water flows in the river, therefore maximizing the period of use of the boat ramp. River flows (measured at the Snake River near Minidoka U.S. Geological Survey gauge approximately 0.5 miles downstream of the project location) vary widely at the project location depending on time of year, irrigation demand, and water supply. In general, a minimum flow of at least 525 cubic feet per second (cfs) is maintained during winter months when water from the Snake River is being stored in

reservoirs upstream of Minidoka Dam (typically late October through early March). Flows increase during spring runoff to reserve flood control space as needed (typically late March through June), and flows are subsequently maintained for irrigation demand (typically June through October). The proposed construction is likely to coincide with a low flow period (October through March) so more of the shoreline is exposed. A preliminary construction schedule has been contemplated for either February through March 2017 or October to November 2017.

Figure 3-3 shows daily flow data for the Snake River near Minidoka for the 30 year period of 1981 to 2010 and demonstrates the general seasonal flow patterns described above. Lines for the minimum, maximum, and median daily discharge, along with shading for the 10th, 25th, 75th, and 90th percentiles are shown. In addition, daily discharge for 2015 and 2016 are also shown for reference. The Snake River upstream of Minidoka Dam experienced an extended drought from 2013 through 2016, causing flows at Minidoka to be minimized. This is evidenced by the low daily discharges from Minidoka during 2015 and 2016, with discharge dropping into the 10th percentile at times.

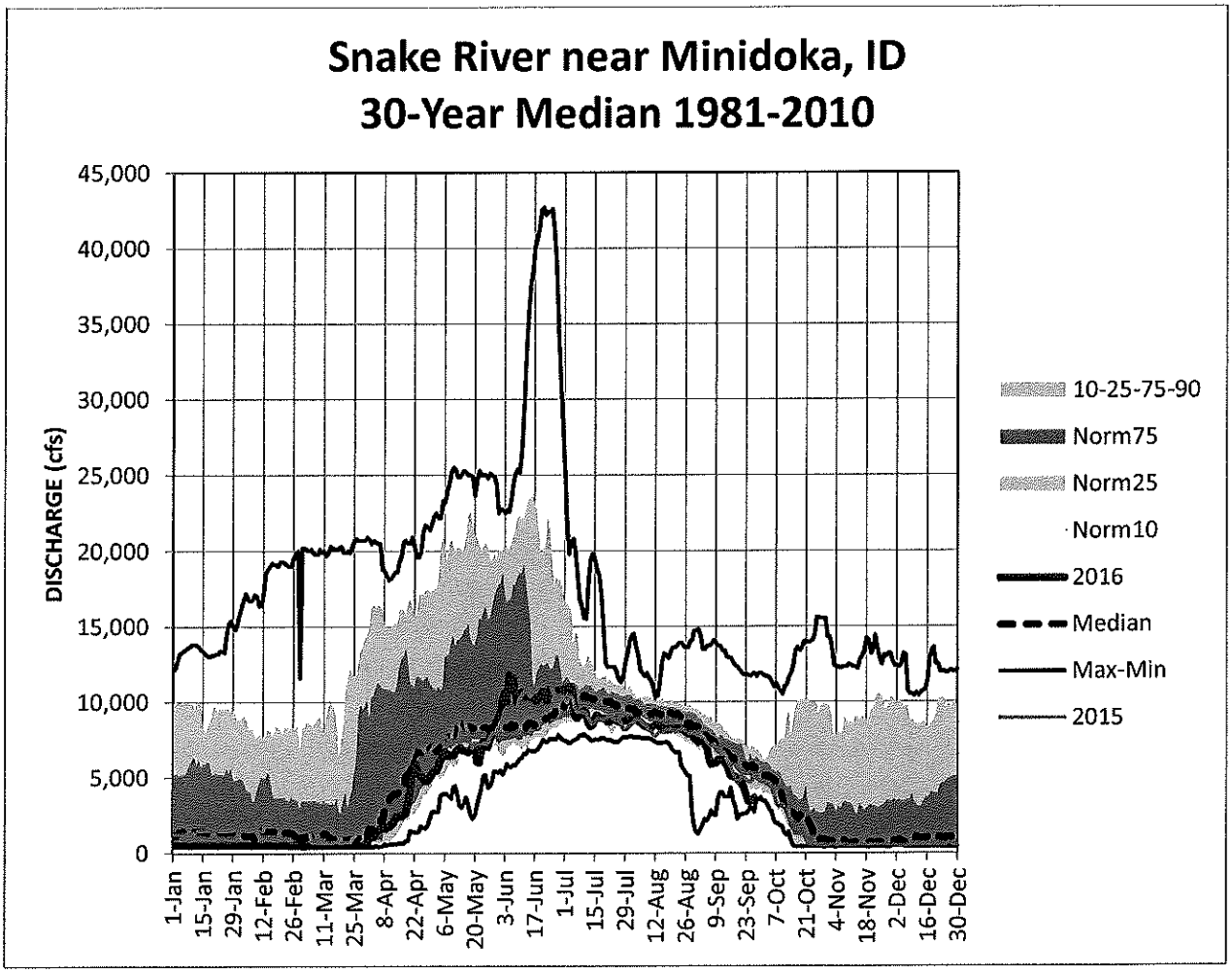


Figure 3-2. Daily flow data for the Snake River near Minidoka for the 30 year period 1981 to 2010, as well as 2015 and 2016.

3.3.2. Environmental Consequences

Alternative A – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing boat ramp would continue to deteriorate in the short- and long-term, directly causing increased bank erosion in the project area. Indirectly, as the existing ramp becomes unusable, use of unimproved boat launching areas will increase, also causing erosion and damage to the river bank at those locations. Bank erosion has the potential to deposit sediment into the river channel, causing minor changes to river hydraulics in those locations and, depending on location and severity of erosion, may impact measurement accuracy at the downstream U.S. Geological Survey Snake River near Minidoka gauge. Basin hydrology and discharges from Minidoka Dam will be unaffected under the No Action Alternative.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the existing boat ramp would be improved, and sufficient bank stabilization would be placed to minimize the effects of erosion at the project location in the long-term. The new ramp would also deter the use of unimproved boat launching areas, indirectly minimizing bank erosion at those locations. In the short-term, construction efforts are likely to require work below the ordinary high water mark for the ramp renovation. Coffer dams or other measures may be required for short periods of time during this construction effort, causing minor short-term effects to river hydraulics. Since the ramp is located away from major river channels, it is not anticipated that river hydraulics would be significantly impacted. The footprint of the Proposed Action boat ramp closely resembles the existing boat ramp; therefore, it is not anticipated that river hydraulics will be affected in the long-term by the Proposed Action. Basin hydrology and discharges from Minidoka Dam will be unaffected under the Proposed Action Alternative. Figure contains a map of the proposed project.

3.4. Cultural Resources

This section discusses potential impacts to cultural resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places within the APE. A record search on file at Reclamation was examined and an archaeological survey of the proposed permit area was completed in October 2016. Additionally, letters were sent to the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to determine if cultural resources important to the Tribes were located within the APE. Reclamation initiated consultation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office in October 2016. Copies of all letters are included in Appendices A, C and D.

3.4.1. Affected Environment

3.4.1.1. Cultural Setting

The following section was adapted from Reclamation's 2004 Resource Management Plan, Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (Reclamation 2004). Evidence of human occupation in southcentral Idaho dates as early as 14,500 years before the present (BP). The three major prehistoric cultural periods that have been identified for southeastern Idaho also apply to south central Idaho:

- Early Prehistoric Period (15,000 to 7,500 BP)
- Middle Prehistoric Period (7,400 to 1,300 BP)
- Late Prehistoric Period (1,300 to 150 BP)

These periods reflect a shift over time from a highly mobile lifestyle involving hunting and gathering (such as seeds, roots, mammals, and fish) to reduced mobility and intensified use of certain highly productive resources (such as camas and salmon). The Study Area is within the Snake River Basin, which was traditionally used by the Shoshone and Bannock Tribes for gathering plants for food and medicine, hunting, fishing, trading, and for ceremonial purposes.

The Shoshone and Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, Idaho, represent two linguistically distinct populations of people. The length of time these Tribes have occupied southern Idaho is a subject of long-standing debate among scholars. Subsistence practices and lifestyles were similar to other Great Basin cultural groups. Because the environment could not sustain large populations, people moved from one resource to the next, relying on a wide variety of resources, including roots, berries, nuts, marmots, squirrels, rabbits, insects, large game, and fish. By the time of the earliest Euroamerican contact in the early 1800s, the Shoshone and Bannock Tribes had acquired the horse, making it easier to procure bison and other resources and to trade.

The earliest Euroamericans in south-central Idaho came to develop the fur trade, to convert the Native Americans, or to explore and survey the region. The major east-west travel route of these early explorers passed the Snake River. Portions of the route later became the Oregon Trail, first used by emigrants in 1841. Settlement of south-central Idaho began in the 1870s, mainly associated with the expansion of Mormon communities out of Utah. Indian relationships with Euroamericans deteriorated as the number of emigrants and settlers increased in the middle and late 1800s. Treaties with the United States Government in 1863 and 1868, and establishment of the Fort Hall Reservation in 1867, confined the Shoshone-Bannock and opened the area for Euroamerican settlement. Continuing hostilities, however, led to military action by the U.S. Government, including the Bannock War of 1878. Following the Bannock War, Congress reduced the area of the Fort Hall Reservation several times.

The arrival of the railroad in the early 1880s was crucial to the development of southeastern Idaho, with several Union Pacific branch lines. Agriculture served as the primary economic activity in late 19th and early 20th centuries, and irrigation systems were of signal importance to that development. In 1894, Congress passed the Carey Act to encourage state and private cooperation in developing irrigated agriculture, and 8 years later it created the Reclamation Service to federalize irrigation in the west.

One of the earliest Federal reclamation projects in Idaho, the Minidoka Project was authorized in 1904. It provided for the construction of Minidoka Dam from 1904 to 1906, and other dams in the region, as well as thousands of miles of canals, laterals, and drains.

3.4.1.2. Field Results

No cultural resources were located within the project area, even though it is within the boundaries of the Minidoka Dam and Power Plant on file at the Idaho State Historical Society. The boat ramp area is mostly comprised of artificial surfaces and has been previously disturbed by the construction of the existing boat ramp. The staging area is extremely disturbed and appears to have been used as a staging area in the past.

A bench monument was found within the APE with the inscription, 'In Memory William E. Martin "Gone Fishing"' and can be seen in Photograph 3-2. William E. Martin was a local resident in the area and his family installed the bench in his memory. The bench may be removed during the project; however, efforts are being made to find more information in order replace or return the bench to family.

Photograph 3-2. Photograph of William E. Martin dedicated bench.

3.4.1.3. Evaluation

The boat ramp was constructed at some point after 1966 and is not historic nor part of the listed Minidoka Dam and Power Plant Site. As the nomination form lists, the importance of the site is linked to the structures and the historical events they are tied to. Therefore, alterations to a feature not associated with the structures would not adversely affect the characteristics the dam is significant for. Also, it would not create an adverse visual effect since there is already a boat ramp in this location and the site configuration will largely remain the same.

3.5. Environmental Consequences

Although the Minidoka Dam and Power Plant Site have been identified within the proposed APE, the project would result in no adverse effect to historic properties.

Alternative A – No Action

As no features of the Minidoka Dam and Power Plant Site have been identified within the APE, there would be no direct or indirect impacts on historic properties.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

As no features of the Minidoka Dam and Power Plant Site have been identified within the APE, there would be no direct or indirect impacts on historic properties.

3.6. Indian Sacred Sites

This section discusses the potential impact of the project to Indian Sacred Sites. An archaeological survey (Appendix E) of the proposed permit area was completed in October 2016. Additionally, letters were sent to the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to determine if there were areas important to the Tribes located within the APE. Copies of all letters are included in Appendices A, C and D.

3.6.1. Affected Environment

It is known that the area has been occupied since Paleoindian times with the most recent occupants identified as the Shoshone who are thought to have moved into the area after about 1000 BP. No Indian Sacred Sites have been identified to Reclamation within the vicinity of the project area.

3.6.2. Environmental Consequences

No Indian Sacred Sites have been identified within the proposed APE and the project would result in no direct or indirect impacts to Indian Sacred Sites.

3.7. Indian Trust Assets

3.7.1. Affected Environment

Indian Trust Assets are legal interests in property held in trust by the United States for Indian Tribes and individuals. The Secretary of the Interior, acting as trustee, holds many assets in trust for Indian Tribes and individuals. Examples of trust assets are lands, minerals, grazing, hunting, fishing, and water rights. While most ITAs are on-reservation, they may also be found off-reservation on federally managed unoccupied lands. The United States has a responsibility to protect and maintain rights reserved by or grated to Indian Tribes and Indian individuals by treaties, statutes, and executive orders. These are sometimes further interpreted through court decisions and regulations.

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, which are federally recognized Tribes located at the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in southeastern Idaho, have trust assets both on and off reservation lands. The Fort Bridger Treaty was signed and agreed to by the Bannock and Shoshone

headman on July 3, 1868. The treaty states in Article 4, that members of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes "...shall have the right to hunt on unoccupied Federal lands of the United States..." This has been interpreted to mean unoccupied Federal lands and to include fishing as a form of hunting.

The Tribes included fishing after the case of State of Idaho vs. Tinno, an off-reservation fishing case in Idaho. The Idaho Supreme court determined that the Shoshone word for "hunt" also included "fish." Under Tinno, the court affirmed the Tribal Members' right to take fish off-reservation pursuant to the Fort Bridger Treaty (Shoshone-Bannock Tribes vs. Fish & Game Commission Idaho 1994).

Other federally recognized Tribes are the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation, located on the Idaho/Nevada border, and the Burns Paiute near Burns, Oregon. These Tribes have cultural and religious interests in the area of the project, but the size and duration of this action would not disturb or impede on these interests.

3.7.2. Environmental Consequences

Alternative A – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to ITAs. The proposed ramp would not be repaired and would remain as is, leading to deterioration and inaccessibility.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

Alternative B would not affect any known ITAs of land, minerals, water rights, monetary holdings, and gathering rights in the direct vicinity. As part of the scoping process, Reclamation requested information from Tribes that traditionally and currently use the area; however, no responses were received. The lack of specific information about the area is not indicative of a lack of importance to Tribes. With no specific response, Reclamation assumes that there would be no adverse effects to ITAs such as lands, minerals, water rights, monetary holdings and gathering rights in the direct vicinity of the proposed action. Implementation of Alternative B would not affect tribal hunting and fishing rights outside the study area.

3.8. Socioeconomics

The socioeconomic character of an area includes its population and economic activity. Socioeconomic changes may occur when a project directly or indirectly changes any of these elements. This section discusses socioeconomic resources within the human environment, particularly population and economic activity that may be impacted. Population is described as the magnitude, characteristics, and distribution of people. Economic activity is described in terms of employment distribution, personal income, and business growth.

3.8.1. Affected Environment

3.8.1.1. Population

Minidoka County, Idaho has an estimated population of 20,461 according to U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) 2015 estimates (USCB 2015). This is a slight increase from 10 years prior in 2005 when the population was 18,650 residents (USCB 2005). Minidoka County is the 14th largest county out of the 44 counties in Idaho. Rupert is the county seat and has the largest population of the county with 5,617 people (USCB 2013). The county is unique in that it is bordered to the south by the Snake River and to the north by lava beds.

3.8.1.2. Employment and Income

Minidoka County is often merged with neighbor Cassia County and known as the Mini-Cassia area according to the Idaho Department of Labor (IDL) (2016). The unemployment rate in Minidoka County was at 3.7% in 2015 and has seen a continual drop of about a percent a year since 2010 (IDL 2016). There has been a trend of seasonal employment within Minidoka County with the main reliance on fresh pack potato operations, farm jobs, and sugar and potato processing. Table 3-1 shows the comparison of the unemployment rate of Minidoka County, the state of Idaho, and the U.S. in 2010, 2015 and 2016. The main growth factor of the area is due to a robust agriculture base and continuing construction activity in the Mini-Cassia area.

Table 3-1. Unemployment rate (%) of Minidoka County, State of Idaho, and United States in 2010, 2015 and 2016.

	2010	2015	2016
Minidoka County	7.4	4.6	3.7
Idaho	9.0	4.1	3.8
United States	9.3	5.1	4.9

3.8.2. Environmental Consequences

Alternative A – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed boat ramp improvement would not occur. The existing conditions of the ramp would worsen over time with continued use. However, the socioeconomic climate would not be affected by this lack of action.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, repair and replacement of the boat ramp would bring short-term, minor economic gains in the local area through the construction process. Additionally, the repairs would allow easier access to the area, however this is not expected to affect the socioeconomic climate as a result. No changes are expected to the ethnographic demographics due to effects from the proposed project.

3.9. Environmental Justice

EO 12898 (59 FR 7629) requires Federal agencies to achieve environmental justice by addressing "disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority and low-income populations." To determine if environmental justice populations are present, the Federal agency examines the demographics of the affected area to determine if the minority (including Native Americans) and/or low-income populations are present. If present, the agency must determine if implementation of the Proposed Action would cause disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on the populations.

3.9.1. Affected Environment

Table 3-2 summarizes the racial characteristics of Minidoka County, Idaho within the project area and compares it to the state of Idaho. Information contained in the 2015 Census of Population was used to identify these populations. White racial categories comprise the highest percentage for Minidoka County, as well as Idaho populations as a whole state (USCB 2016).

By definition from the Federal Office of Management and Budget, race and Hispanic or Latino origin are two separate categories. People who report themselves as Hispanic and Latino can be of any race. Therefore, in Table 3-2, the number of Hispanics or Latinos is not added to the totals of the race columns. For example, Hispanics and Latinos who are white are counted in the total of white in the race table, and Hispanics who are black or African American are counted in that race category.

Table 3-2. Summary of racial populations in Minidoka, County and State of Idaho.

U.S. Census Bureau 2015 Statistics	Minidoka County	Idaho
2015 Total Population Estimate	20,461	1,654,930
White, percent	94.4	93.4
Black or African American, percent	0.8	0.8
American Indian and Alaska Native, percent	2.3	1.7
Asian, percent	0.6	1.5
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, percent	*	0.2
Two or more races, percent	1.9	2.3
Hispanic or Latino, percent	34.1	12.2
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	63.2	82.5

**Value greater than zero but less than half unit of measure shown*

Based on this review, Hispanic or Latino populations represent a substantial percentage of the project area population. Due to the fact that this is a small, localized action, there will be

no significant effect on any minority group including Hispanic and Latino populations. This is a safety action that will improve the recreational area for all.

Low-income populations are identified by several socioeconomic characteristics. Specific characteristics used in this description of the existing environment, as categorized by the 2015 Census, are income (per capita income, median household income) and percentage of the population below poverty. Table 3-3 shows income and poverty rate data for Minidoka County and the state of Idaho.

Table 3-3. Income and poverty data for Minidoka County and the State of Idaho.

Geographic Area	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	People Below Poverty
Minidoka County	$20,238	$44,220	16.8%
State of Idaho	$23,087	$47,334	15.1%

3.9.2. Environmental Consequences

Alternative A – No Action

The No Action Alternative would not alter the current regional environmental justice status based on the presented information above and therefore would cause no environmental justice impacts.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

The Proposed Action Alternative has been reviewed through census data and application of the EJSCREEN tool. No minority or low-income groups, as defined by EO 12898, would be disproportionately affected by health or environmental effects as the results of the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative.

3.10. Recreation

3.10.1. Affected Environment

The area below Minidoka Dam is managed by Reclamation, although USFWS has enforcement authority within the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge. The Minidoka Boat Ramp is one of only two recreation improvements in the area below the dam and spillway. The site is located on the north side of the river and includes a concrete boat ramp, a dock, accessible route and parking. Also, a vault toilet is located across the road; however, the parking and route do not meet current accessibility standards. Public access to the area below the dam is from along 300 North Road on the north side of the river, and along the road to the unimproved Bishop's Hole launch point on the south side of the river.

Bank fishing and birding are popular activities below the dam. This area offers easy access on improved roads without an entrance fee. Additionally, the river below the dam can be accessed by boat up to the buoy line when flows are sufficient to navigate the channel.

3.10.1.1. Fishing

Fishermen harvest primarily rainbow trout from this stretch of the river. Fishing is particularly good just below the powerplant on the south side of the river because the water is well-aerated and food is available in the form of fish injured while going through the turbines. Some fishermen access this area from the bridge below the spillway, in conjunction with some cross-country travel. When the water is low, some people access the south side of the river just below the dam by crossing east from Bishop's Hole.

The north side of the river is one of the most popular places to fish below the dam due to the easy access from the road. Visitors park either at the Minidoka Boat Ramp or along 300 North Road. Rainbow trout congregate in this area for the insect hatches (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.) The North Side Canal also has some rainbow trout, but fencing prevents fishermen from getting close enough to the existing headworks to access the most productive fishing in the canal.

Although the river freezes, fishermen do not ice fish on it. Instead, they are able to bank fish into open water in several places along the river, such as the channel by the Minidoka Boat Ramp (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.) High water flows force people to bank fish, while low flows allow them to walk on gravel bars, or hop from rock to rock (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.). Among locals, the area below the spillway and dam are generally preferred to American Falls Reservoir because it is closer and the bank fishing is at least comparable. All but a small portion in the west end of this area below the dam is included in the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge. No game other than fish may be taken from this portion of the Refuge.

Although no formal visitation studies have occurred below the dam, it is estimated that approximately 80 percent of fishing visitation is local fishermen from Minidoka and Cassia Counties, 10 percent from other parts of the Snake River Plain, and 10 percent from out-of-state. An estimated 75 percent of the fishing is done with the intent to harvest, rather than catch and release (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

3.10.1.2. Birding

The area below the dam ranks high as a destination to watch unique birds, spring and fall migrations, and water birds in summer, especially Sabine's gulls. Sabine's gulls are transient in other areas in the region, but they reliably stay below the dam for about 2 weeks between late August and mid-September after nesting in the arctic. They are easily seen from the Minidoka Boat Ramp and Bishop's Hole, as are cormorants and pelicans (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

Several aspects of the area are particularly attractive to birds, especially open water in winter and abundant food sources including a high invertebrate population, the caddisfly hatch in July, and fish injured going through the turbines (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.). Minidoka Wildlife Refuge is an "Important Bird Area" of global significance. Birds can be seen at a relatively close vantage point from below the dam. Birding below the dam is more popular than below the existing spillway because there is significantly more diversity in bird species.

In addition to Bishop's Hole and Minidoka Boat Ramp, good viewing and parking are available at the east end of 300 North Road. Birders also drive slowly along 300 North Road, parking at the side of the road if they see something interesting. Regardless of the flow level in the river, visitors use the same access points for birding. The only time the birds are disturbed is normally when there are several boats in the river (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

Although far more birding occurs along the river below the dam because of the hatch, the biodiversity, and the ease of access, the area below the existing spillway is popular from July through September for observation of shorebirds that like mudflats. Typical water level fluctuations do not significantly affect the availability of shorebird observation opportunities below the existing spillway because there is nearly always some water present, with some winter exceptions (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

Birders enjoy observing ducks and geese from the existing spillway catwalk because of easy access and good view. Some birders drive the roads and park when they find birds they wish to observe. Others walk carrying binoculars or spotting scopes. Most birders remain in areas of sound footing, so there is relatively little danger of them falling due to the terrain (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.). Water level fluctuations do not affect the way people access these locations. There are no boats in the area to disturb the birds, and fishermen have little affect on birding opportunities below the existing spillway (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

Birders from Minidoka and Cassia counties are estimated to make up 70 percent of the birders below the dam. Another 20 percent of the birders are estimated to come from elsewhere in the Snake River Plain, with the balance from out-of-state. Birding below the dam and in the park has increased in popularity at an estimated 10 percent per year since 2000 (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

3.10.1.3. Other Activities

In addition to fishermen and birders, visitors below the dam also include sightseers, photographers, and boaters. The area below the dam is almost entirely within the Minidoka Refuge, which is closed to hunting and game retrieval except in designated areas on the south side and east end of Lake Walcott. Therefore, hunting is not popular in the area immediately below the dam.

3.10.1.4. Visitation

Visitation below the dam cannot be definitively divided between fishermen, birders, and other visitors. Visitation is estimated based on the number of vehicles at the various parking areas multiplied by a range of 2 to 2.5 visitors per vehicle on average. During the peak season between May 1 and September 15, it is estimated that there are typically 6 to 10 people on weekdays and 9 to 20 people on weekend days at the Minidoka Boat Ramp. Observed visitation at Bishop's Hole is from 10 to 12 people on weekdays and 15 to 25 people on weekend days. It must be noted that many of these people move to other locations periodically during the day. Observations have not been made as to how long the average visitor stays in the area below the dam (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

Both the Minidoka Boat Ramp and Bishop's Hole accommodate fishing, birding, and launching boats. Boaters often have drivers shuttle them to the launch point and leave their vehicles and trailers at take-out points downstream, so their vehicles would not be included in visitation estimates unless they were unloading prior to floating at the time visitation counts were made.

During the use season, there are typically 6 to 10 people on weekdays and 9 to 20 people on weekend days at the east end of 300 North Road where parking is available. Additional vehicles often are parked further west, along 300 North Road below the Minidoka Boat Ramp (Bouffard 2009, pers. comm.).

3.10.1.5. Access

Public access closures in this area include fences preventing access to the dam and powerplant facilities and a buoy line across the river below the powerplant. These measures allow power boats to run upstream on the river, but limit their proximity to the dam facilities. Pedestrians may access the river up to the buoy line.

3.10.2. Environmental Consequences

Many factors influence the quality and abundance of water and water-associated recreational use in and adjacent to the proposed action area. These factors include river water levels, access to desired recreation activity locations, river and spillway area water levels related to safety, fishery productivity, user conflicts, and others. Recreation impact indicators are determined by evaluating projected access availability and desirability of visitation in the geographic area for each popular activity under each alternative.

Impact indicators for recreation vary by location. If recreationists are not able to pursue recreational activities in what have been historically desirable locations, visitation would likely be displaced to other locations in proximity to the project. If no desirable locations are known to exist nearby, visitation likely would be displaced outside the general area.

The public could continue to launch their boats from the bank and cause greater resource damage. A portion of the displaced launching would move to access from across the river at Bishop's Hole. Bishop's Hole is an unimproved launch area and this increased impact would cause greater resource damage. Emergency responders would be forced to move down river 11.3 miles to launch from private facilities, which would increase response times.

The following impact indicators are used for this analysis of recreation effects:

Ability to fish, bird watch, and launch boats from the Minidoka Boat Ramp launch point.

Alternative A – No Action

No impacts to recreation are anticipated under the No Action Alternative.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

Construction Impacts

The construction zone closure would temporarily stop public access to the parking area, boat ramp, and restroom. The Public will experience short-term losses of the choices of recreation activity, and the quality of recreation experiences, due to construction-related impacts such as noise, dust, construction traffic, and temporary displacement of aquatic or terrestrial species that are normally present. These impacts will likely be intolerable to fishermen, birders, or others seeking solitude.

Visitation would be displaced to other locations in avoidance of the noise and traffic of construction operations. Recreational visitation along the river for about 5 miles may be reduced in the short-term in response to the difficulty of recreational access. All travel between 300 North Road and the dam facility would likely be restricted to Reclamation and construction workers during construction. The road is used to access the boat ramp and Minidoka dam and will not impede on any surrounding recreational opportunities or access. Recreation would improve long term since the ramp is currently unusable and visitor safety would improve with the proposed action.

3.10.3. Environmental Commitments & Mitigation

Signs would be posted during construction with maps showing the availability of recreation opportunity alternatives outside the construction zone.

3.11. Climate Change

Climate represents the long-term statistical characterization of daily, seasonal and annual weather conditions such as temperature, relative humidity, precipitation, cloud cover, solar radiation, and wind speed and direction. Climate is composed of the main weather conditions in a given region over the course of the year, which is averaged over a series of years. A region's climate is controlled by latitude, terrain, altitude, nearby water bodies and their currents and, more recently proven, large scale human activity. Climate change has the potential to profoundly alter habitats through both direct and indirect effects.

Projections, rather than predictions, guide the estimates for climate change. This is largely because future climate events are not static or predictable based on historic accounts like other scientific data. Trends are only identifiable through 12 global circulation models projections of worldwide climatological effects. Higher levels of information can be complemented through downscaling regional models. The information below is presented within this framework of understanding.

3.11.1. Affected Environment

The Climate Impacts Group (CIG) at the University of Washington has analyzed the effects of global climate change on the Pacific Northwest (CIG 2006). Relative to average

temperatures from 1970 to 1999, climate models project a future rate of warming in the Pacific Northwest of approximately 0.5°F (0.3°C) per decade through 2050, with the greatest temperature increases being during June through August. Models also indicate rising temperatures could affect regional precipitation including decreased snow packs and summer flows, increased winter flows, and earlier spring runoffs.

3.11.2. Environmental Consequences

Alternative A – No Action

The environmental consequences analysis for the climate change section analyzes two scenarios; what impacts the action (No Action or Proposed Action) has on climate change, and what impacts climate change has on the action. Both scenarios are presented for each alternative.

The No Action Alternative would have no effect on climate change in the long- or short-terms. The proposed construction would not occur and the existing conditions would remain, which would lead to deterioration and loss of the site and have no effect on climate change.

In the long-term (more than 10 years), climate change could alter precipitation patterns and river hydrology. This could result in potential increases or decreases in the magnitude and duration of flow events, alter the timing of snowmelt, increase or decrease flow regimes, and change river levels. All of these factors could influence physical sites and biological communities, affecting species assemblages, timing and use of the project area, and could also lead to change in noxious and invasive weed cover. Additionally, climate change could indirectly affect soil erosion rates due to more or less precipitation. These would occur regardless of an action.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would require heavy equipment operations that would use fossil fuels and emit exhaust that partially contributes to climate change. These emissions would not be expected to affect climate change in the short- or long-term because the amount of vehicle/equipment emissions is relatively minor and would occur in a short amount of time (i.e., 2 months to complete construction). The proposed action is not likely to have any effects (long- or short-term) on climate change.

Effects of climate change on the project areas are the same as those identified in the No Action Alternative. However, restoration of disturbed land (area contoured to match the existing shoreline) would reduce the potential impacts on erosion from climate change in the short- and long-term.

3.11.3. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative Effect of Impact is defined as the "impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions" (40 CFR 1508.7). The Council on Environmental Quality interprets this regulation as referring only to the cumulative impact of the direct and indirect effects of the proposed action and its alternatives when added to the aggregate effect of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time.

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future impacts identified in the area (public or private) that would adversely affect the same resource area evaluated in this EA would be additive effects to the proposed project. Actions considered for cumulative impacts are the maintenance to the shoreline to address erosion and foreseeable future projects at Minidoka Dam. Minidoka Unit 7 Draft Tube Gate Replacement and Powerhouse Sluice Gate Plugs at Minidoka Power Plant is a foreseeable future project near the Minidoka boat ramp. The project will include dewatering a portion of the Minidoka Power Plant Stilling Basin by setting a temporary cofferdam immediately adjacent to the draft tube to be replaced. No effects from this project will impact the Minidoka boat ramp replacement due to the difference in timing for construction on each project.

It has been determined through the evaluation of each resource that biological resources, threatened and endangered species, hydrology and hydraulics, cultural resources, Indian sacred sites, Indian trust assets, socioeconomics, environmental justice, and climate change will not be affected by cumulative impacts. However, there will be a positive cumulative impact on recreational activities. Long-term impacts to recreational activities, safety and user experience at this popular location on the north side of the river would be greatly improved by providing facilities that meet current safety and accessibility standards.

Chapter 4. Consultation and Coordination

4.1. Agency Consultation and Coordination

In compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA of 1966 (as amended in 1992), Reclamation is consulted with the Idaho SHPO to identify cultural and historic properties in the area of potential effect. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office for Idaho was initiated in October 2016 (Appendix A). On December 20, 2016, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office concurred with Reclamation's finding of no historic properties affected for the project.

4.2. Tribal Consultation and Coordination

Reclamation mailed scoping letters to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes on November 22, 2016 (Appendix C and D). No responses or concerns from the Tribes were brought forward during the scoping period. Reclamation mailed consultation letters to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes on December 2, 2016. No responses from the tribe were received.

Literature Cited

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Parenthetical Reference	Bibliographic Citation
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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Idaho State Historic Preservation Office's Response to Reclamation's Consultation

www.history.idaho.gov

Idaho • State Historical Society

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho

Janet Gallimore
Executive Director

Administration
2205 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, Idaho 83712-8250
Office: (208) 334-2682
Fax: (208) 334-2774

Membership and Fund Development
2205 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, Idaho 83712-8250
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Historical Museum and Education Programs
610 North Julia Davis Drive
Boise, Idaho 83702-7695
Office: (208) 334-2120
Fax: (208) 334-4059

State Historic Preservation Office and Historic Sites Archeological Survey of Idaho
210 Main Street
Boise, Idaho 83702-7264
Office: (208) 334-3861
Fax: (208) 334-2775

Statewide Sites:
• Franklin Historic Site
• Pierce Courthouse
• Rock Creek Station and
• Stricker Homesite

Old Penitentiary
2445 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, Idaho 83712-8254
Office: (208) 334-2844
Fax: (208) 334-3225

Idaho State Archives
2205 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, Idaho 83712-8250
Office: (208) 334-2620
Fax: (208) 334-2626

North Idaho Office
112 West 4th Street, Suite #7
Moscow, Idaho 83843
Office: (208) 882-1540
Fax: (208) 882-1763

Historical Society is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

DATE: December 20, 2016
TO: Roland K. Springer
FEDERAL AGENCY: Bureau of Reclamation
PROJECT NAME: Proposed Boat Ramp Replacement below Minidoka Project, Minidoka County, Idaho
Section 106 Evaluation

X The field work and documentation presented in this report meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

No additional investigations are recommended. Project can proceed as planned.

Additional information is required to complete the project review. (See comments below.)

Additional investigations are recommended. (See comments below).

Identification of Historic Properties (36 CFR 900.4):

No historic properties were identified within the project area.

Property is not eligible. Reason:

Property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Criterion: _A _B _C _D Context for Evaluation:

No historic properties will be affected within the project area.

Assessment of Adverse Effects (36 CFR 800.5):

X Project will have *no adverse effect* on historic properties.

Property will have an *adverse effect* on historic properties. Additional consultation is required.

Comments:

Your archaeologist should be notified immediately if archaeological materials are found during project construction. Please contact me at 208-334-3847 ext. 111 if you have any questions.

/S/ Mary Anne Davis — December 20, 2016

Mary Anne Davis, Associate State Archaeologist
State Historic Preservation Office — **Date**

Cc: Nikki Polson, BOR

Appendix B – USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) Data

IPaC
My project Minidoka County, Idaho

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

This project potentially impacts **25 resources** managed or regulated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Endangered species

Proposed, candidate, threatened, and endangered species are managed by the Endangered Species Program of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The list of species below are those that may occur or could potentially be affected by activities in this location:

Birds

Yellow-billed Cuckoo Coccyzus americanus

Threatened (A species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range)

Snails

Snake River Physa Snail Physa natricina

Endangered (A species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range)

Critical habitats

Potential effects to critical habitat(s) in this location must be analyzed along with the endangered species themselves.

THERE ARE NO CRITICAL HABITATS IN THIS LOCATION

Migratory birds

Birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Any activity that results in the take (to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct) of migratory birds or eagles is prohibited unless authorized by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.[1] There are no provisions for allowing the take of migratory birds that are unintentionally killed or injured.

Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in the take of migratory birds is responsible for complying with the appropriate regulations and implementing appropriate conservation measures.

1. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

The following species of migratory birds could potentially be affected by activities in this location:

Bald Eagle Haliaeetus leucocephalus
Season: Wintering

Black Rosy-finch Leucosticte atrata
Season: Year-round

Brewer's Sparrow Spizella breweri
Season: Breeding

Burrowing Owl Athene cunicularia
Season: Breeding

Cassin's Finch Carpodacus cassinii
Season: Year-round

Eared Grebe Podiceps nigricollis
Season: Breeding

Ferruginous Hawk Buteo regalis
Season: Year-round

Fox Sparrow Passerella iliaca
Season: Breeding

Greater Sage-grouse Centrocercus urophasianus
Season: Year-round

Green-tailed Towhee Pipilo chlorurus
Season: Breeding

Lewis's Woodpecker Melanerpes lewis
Season: Breeding

Loggerhead Shrike Lanius ludovicianus
Season: Breeding

Long-billed Curlew Numenius americanus
Season: Breeding

Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus
Season: Breeding

Pinyon Jay Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus
Season: Year-round

Sage Thrasher Oreoscoptes montanus
Season: Breeding

Short-eared Owl Asio flammeus
Season: Year-round

Swainson's Hawk Buteo swainsoni
Season: Breeding

Virginia's Warbler Vermivora virginiae
Season: Breeding

Western Grebe aechmophorus occidentalis
Season: Breeding

Willow Flycatcher Empidonax traillii
Season: Breeding

Wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries

Any activity proposed on National Wildlife Refuge lands must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

This location overlaps all or part of the following National Wildlife Refuges:

Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge 39,193.92 acres
(208) 436-3589

Wetlands in the National Wetlands Inventory

Impacts to NWI wetlands and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District.
This location overlaps all or part of the following wetlands:

Freshwater Emergent Wetland

PEM1Ch

Freshwater Forested/shrub Wetland

PSS1Ch

Riverine

R3UBH

Appendix C – Reclamation's Scoping Letter to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Pacific Northwest Region
Snake River Area Office
230 Collins Road
Boise, ID 83702-4520

IN REPLY REFER TO:

NOV 2 2 2016

SRA-1214
ENV-1.00

VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS

Honorable Blaine Edmo
Chairman
Fort Hall Business Council
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
1 Pima Drive
Fort Hall, ID 83203-0306

Subject: Request for Comments Regarding the Proposal to Excavate and Replace the Existing Minidoka Boat Ramp and Parking Area; and Provide Accessible Parking, Minidoka Project, Idaho

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Bureau of Reclamation is proposing to excavate and replace the existing Minidoka Boat Ramp located on the Snake River approximately 0.25 miles below the Minidoka Dam to meet current safety standards. Ancillary facilities would be brought up to modern and accessible standards by reconfiguration and construction of the boat parking area, and completion of accessible parking and route to the restroom. All these proposed activities would be located downstream from the Minidoka Dam along the north bank of the Snake River. The purpose of this letter is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Enclosed is a Scoping Information Package describing the project proposal.

Analysis of the proposal is ongoing and will be documented in an environmental assessment, with an estimated project completion date in 2017. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the Proposed Action and to identify alternatives to the Proposed Action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

Please send your written comments as soon as possible to: Ms. Rochelle Ochoa, Natural Resources Specialist, Bureau of Reclamation, Snake River Area Office, 230 Collins Road, Boise, Idaho 83702, or via email at rochoa@usbr.gov.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Ms. Rochelle Ochoa, Natural Resources Specialist, at 208-383-2277.

Sincerely,

ACTING FOR Roland K. Springer
Area Manager

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Wes Jones
Emergency Manager
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
1 Pima Drive
Fort Hall, ID 83203-0306

Mr. Cleve Davis
Environmental Program Manager
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
1 Pima Drive
Fort Hall, ID 83203-0306

Mr. Chad Colter
Fish and Wildlife Director
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
1 Pima Drive
Fort Hall, ID 83203-0306
(w/encl to each)

Appendix D – Reclamation's Scoping Letter to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Pacific Northwest Region
Snake River Area Office
230 Collins Road
Boise, ID 83702-4520

IN REPLY REFER TO:

NOV 2 2 2016

SRA-1214
ENV-1.00

VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS

Honorable Lindsey Manning
Chairman
Tribal Business Council
Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Headquarters
1623 Hospital Loop
Owyhee, NV 89832

Subject: Request for Comments Regarding the Proposal to Excavate and Replace the Existing Minidoka Boat Ramp and Parking Area; and Provide Accessible Parking, Minidoka Project, Idaho

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Bureau of Reclamation is proposing to excavate and replace the existing Minidoka Boat Ramp located on the Snake River approximately 0.25 miles below the Minidoka Dam to meet current safety standards. Ancillary facilities would be brought up to modern and accessible standards by reconfiguration and construction of the boat parking area, and completion of accessible parking and route to the restroom. All these proposed activities would be located downstream from the Minidoka Dam along the north bank of the Snake River. The purpose of this letter is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Enclosed is a Scoping Information Package describing the project proposal.

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The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Ms. Rochelle Ochoa, Natural Resources Specialist, at 208-383-2277.

Sincerely,

ACTING FOR

Roland K. Springer
Area Manager

Enclosure