United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3815 Schreiber Way
Coeur d'Alene Idaho

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Clark Fork River Delta Restoration Project
DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2013-0019-EA

Adoption of Environmental Assessment

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), prepared an environmental assessment (EA) evaluating the Proposed Action for this restoration project (see DOE/EA-1969, dated April 2014). The proposed action includes restoration activities on BLM-administered land as well as issuance of a free-use permit to the Idaho Fish and Game for use of mineral materials. The BLM formally adopts this EA in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEA) guidance (see CEQ Guidance Regarding NEPA Regulations, 48 Fed. Reg.34263 (July 28, 1983)). As required by the CEQ guidance, the BLM has independently evaluated the information contained in the EA, and takes full responsibility for its scope and content.

Finding

Based upon review of the EA, I have determined that the Clark Fork River Delta Restoration Project will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. As described and analyzed in the EA, no environmental effects meet the definition of significance as defined by regulations to implement NEPA found at 40 CFR 1508.27. This finding is based on my consideration of both the context and intensity of the project, as described below. Context means that the significance of an action was analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the local rather than in the world as a whole. Both short-and-long-term effects are relevant. Intensity refers to the severity of impact.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Impacts to geology and soils would be low.

- Mitigation measures (use of sediment barriers, reseeding disturbed areas, covering stockpiled excavated materials, etc.) would minimize the risk of soil erosion during construction and would aid in soil recovery.
- Impacts from excavation, importing rock material, embankment and slope construction and grading would result in some temporary erosion or soil loss and would be mitigated through best management practices (BMPs).

• Riprap slope protection and placement of woody debris would reduce the potential for wave action to erode lakebed and banks, decreasing the rate of soil loss.
• Raised ground surfaces would result in an increase of protected soil resources at elevations available for vegetative growth.

VEGETATION AND WETLANDS

Impacts to vegetation and wetlands would be low.

• Existing wetlands would be restored and converted from sparsely vegetated to partially vegetated or vegetated wetlands.
• Newly created island surfaces where land is currently submerged would increase native plant communities, including wetlands.
• Most construction zones are sparsely vegetated and dominated by invasive plants and all disturbed areas above the high-water mark would be reseeded and replanted.
• Slope protection, the placement of woody debris and the creation of new island surfaces would help establish forested and scrub-shrub wetland and riparian areas where they do not currently exist.Reduced erosion and scouring wave action would curtail the ongoing loss of vegetation through erosion
• The removal of invasive species would increase the ability for native species to establish.

WATER RESOURCES

Impacts to water resources would be low to moderate.

• Construction activities would result in temporary water quality impacts such as sediment plumes and water temperature increase from vegetation removal. Best management practices (BMPs) would reduce the potential for erosion and runoff during construction activities, help stabilize disturbed areas, and reduce potential turbidity impacts.
• Erosion protection measure would reduce the potential for wave action to erode banks, decreasing suspended-sediment concentrations.
• Establishment of vegetation would reduce the release of sediment into surface water and improve water quality.
• Large woody debris would disrupt flow (reduce velocity) and redirect flow away from islands, reducing erosion and suspended sediment in the system. Woody debris would also trap sediments, removing them from adjacent water bodies.
• The addition of fill and riprap would incrementally reduce flood-storage capacity and the removal of vegetation could impact floodplain functions because vegetation can slow floodwaters and prevent erosion.
• Long-term benefits of project activities would result in reducing erosion and protecting existing floodplains. In addition, implementation of BMPs would minimize the potential impacts to floodplains.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Impacts to fish and wildlife would be low.

• In-water construction activities will take place during in-water work windows when bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout are unlikely to be in the area.
• Activities related to raising islands would occur during the dry season and at low lake levels.
• Mitigation measures and best management practices would reduce the potential for erosion and runoff to enter the Clark Fork River and Lake Pend Oreille, thus, reducing impacts to fish.

• Noise and vibration impacts to fish due to pile-driving activities would be minimized through mitigation measures (including use of a wood block or bubble curtain).
• Mitigation measures requiring the inspection and cleaning of construction equipment prior to entering and leaving the site would reduce the risk of introducing invasive aquatic species into the Clark Fork River and Lake Pend Oreille.
• Although equipment would be mobilized during migratory birds breeding times, no construction activities would take place during this time (June – September).
• No work would occur near the known bald eagle nest on the south side of Area 7 during the breeding season (February 1 – July 31).
• The creation of a more channelized system containing areas of thermal refugia and habitat complexity would have a positive impact on fish and wildlife habitat.

LAND USE AND RECREATION

Impacts to land use and recreation would be low.

• There would be no change in land use or land ownership as a result of the project.
• Signage will be posted notifying the public of the construction schedule and accessibility.
• Although public access to Drift Yard Road and the Clark Fork River Access Area would be restricted during construction activities, Johnson Creek Access Area and Denton Slough Boat Launch would be open to the public, and areas outside the designated construction area safety buffer would be accessible during project implementation.
• Waterfowl hunting would not be allowed within the delta islands during the construction seasons from May to April, but hunting would resume once construction is completed.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Impacts to cultural resources would be low.

• Historic and archaeological resources potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places would be avoided.
• Mitigation measures to mark avoidance areas and to stop work if cultural materials are revealed during construction would lessen potential cultural resource impacts.
• In the long-term, potential impacts to cultural resources would decline because sites in the delta would be protected against further erosion.

AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Impacts to aesthetics and visual resources would be low to moderate.

• Due to limited public access and safety buffers around construction areas, views of construction activities will be limited to the waters of Lake Pend Oreille, the waters of the delta, and State Highway 200 (Idaho 200). Where the activities would be seen by the public, they would be temporary and seen for a limited amount of time.
• Project activities would limit erosion and enhance the natural vegetation of the delta, and reduce the appearance of a bare unvegetated shoreline.
• Vegetation management and plantings along island shorelines would increase habitat diversity and increase the presence of wildlife in the delta, both of which would have positive impacts on aesthetic and visual resources.

AIR QUALITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, NOISE, HAZARDOUS WASTE, AND PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Impacts to air quality, climate change, noise, hazardous waste and public health and safety would be low, except for noise receptors within 2,000 feet of construction activities.

- Air quality impacts would be limited to the construction site, would be temporary in nature, and would not result in violations of air quality standards. Although construction would accelerate rates of soil organic matter decomposition and carbon emissions to the atmosphere in the short term, these impacts would be offset through long-term sediment accumulation and deposition.
- Greenhouse gas emissions would be below EPA's mandatory reporting threshold of 25,000 metric tons and would not represent a substantial change from current conditions. Temporary construction noise could be discernible at the closest offsite residences, but would not be discernible for recreationists because fishing areas would have limited access during construction and a safety buffer would be in place for boaters. Therefore, noise impacts would be temporary and low except for noise receptors within 2,000 feet of construction where the impact would be moderate.
- Potential hazardous waste and public health and safety impacts during construction would be mitigated with the construction safety practices identified in the EA and Mitigation Action Plan.

TRANSPORTATION

Impacts to transportation would be low.

- Traffic impacts from construction on Idaho 200 would be localized and temporary, and would result in less than one percent increase in traffic volume.
- Traffic control signs would be posted on Idaho 200 to alert motorists of construction traffic.
- The project construction schedule would be posted in local newspapers and websites.

SOCIOECONOMICS

Impacts to socioeconomics would be low.

- There would be no-to-few temporary employment opportunities during construction and no additional employment following completion of the Proposed Action.
- Most construction employment would be outside the busier summer tourist season, so existing local lodging is expected to be sufficient to accommodate non-local workers during construction.
- Some local procurement of equipment and spending by construction workers would have a low, positive impact on the regional economy during construction.
- Implementation of the restoration efforts would have no adverse or disproportionate impacts on environmental justice (minority or low-income) populations.

/s/_____ ____7/22/14____
Kurt Pavlat Date
Field Manager