



Natural Resources Conservation Service
100 East B Street, Room 3001
PO Box 33124
Casper, Wyoming 82602

Phone: (307) 233-6750
Fax: (307) 233-6795

Finding of No Significant Impact for the Environmental Assessment on the Little Snake River Restoration Project

AGENCY ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The Little Snake River Restoration Project was developed to restore approximately six channel-miles of the Little Snake River located primarily upstream of the Town of Baggs, Wyoming. The NRCS has prepared the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Little Snake River Restoration project in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended. The Little Snake River Conservation District, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department participated as cooperating agencies in the preparation of this EA.

An announcement of the availability of the EA for public comment was published in the Rawlins Times on June 11, 2013 for a 30-day period and one comment letter was received. The Final EA incorporates the responses to public comments (Appendix A of the accompanying EA).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THE EA

Two alternatives were analyzed in the EA, including a No Action Alternative (Alternative 1) and a Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative 2). The two alternatives are characterized below.

Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative): The restoration project will not be implemented.

Alternative 2 (Action Alternative): Restoration activities including bank stabilization will occur on approximately 24,000 feet of the river channel. Wetlands creation will occur on approximately 10 acres. Three irrigation diversions will be replaced. The proposed activities would begin in 2013 and be completed by 2014.

IDENTIFICATION OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Based on the analysis presented in the EA, supporting documentation, concurrence from participating cooperating agencies, and review of public comments, I have selected Alternative 2 as the Preferred Alternative. Alternative 2 best meets the purpose and need as outlined in the EA. Alternative 1 was not selected because it did not meet project objectives.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Upon consideration of the affected environment, alternatives, environmental consequences, and comments and coordination with concerned public and agencies, I have determined that the proposed

action, Alternative 2, is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Pursuant to the implementing regulations for NEPA (40 Code of Federal Records (CFR) parts 1500-1508); the USDA Departmental Policy for the NEPA (7 CFR part 1b); the NRCS Regulations (7 CFR part 650); and the NRCS policy (General Manual Title 190, Part 410), the NRCS gives notice that an environmental impact statement is not being prepared for the Little Snake River Restoration Project. Thus, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is being made. This finding is based on the following factors:

1. There are no anticipated adverse effects to historic or cultural resources or agricultural lands, including prime farmlands from the selection of Alternative 2. NRCS regulations and policy (NRCS General Manual 420 Part 401 and General Manual 190 part 410) require that the NRCS identify, assess, and avoid effects to historic or cultural resources and prime farmlands. In accordance with these requirements it is not anticipated that the proposed action would have adverse effects on these resources. In the event that any cultural sites or materials are discovered during project implementation, activities will immediately cease in that area and the appropriate officials will be promptly notified for appropriate action.
2. Alternative 2 will not result in significantly adverse impacts to water resources. All impacts will be short term and limited to the construction phase of the project. Turbidity levels during normal spring run-off periods are considerably higher than those expected during construction.
3. Implementation of Alternative 2 will improve existing in-stream infrastructure conditions. Alternative 2 does not adversely affect public health or safety. The proposed action will have a positive effect on recreational opportunities.
4. The proposed action will not adversely affect the unique characteristics of the geographic area.
5. The effects on the human environment are not considered controversial for Alternative 2.
6. The proposed action is not considered uncertain and does not involve unique or unknown risks.
7. The restoration scheduled with Alternative 2 will re-establish riparian vegetation and substantially improve wildlife and aquatic habitat.
8. No significant impacts are anticipated from noxious weeds due to planned mitigation measures.
9. The proposed action will not significantly adversely affect an endangered or threatened species, or any habitat critical to an endangered or threatened species.
10. Implementation of Alternative 2 with the established mitigation measures will not have cumulatively significant impacts [40 CFR 508.27 (b) (7)].
11. The Preferred Alternative does not violate federal, state, local law, or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. The major laws identified include the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Executive Order on Environmental Justice, Farmland Protection Policy Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and National Historic Preservation Act.

No administrative action on implementation of the proposed action will be taken until 15 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Availability in the local news media.

For information regarding the Final EA and this finding, contact: Astrid Martinez, State Conservationist, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, P.O. Box 33124, Casper, Wyoming, 82602-5011; or by e-mail at astrid.martinez@wy.usda.gov.

Conclusion: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the accompanying Little Snake River Restoration Project Final EA, I have determined that the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2) would not have any significant impact on the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required.

By: 

Astrid Martinez
Wyoming State Conservationist
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

8.2.13

Date