

U.S. Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

**Albuquerque Area Office
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

Finding of No Significant Impact

**San Acacia Priority Sites
River Miles 114 and 113**



Manager, Environment Division

2/28/05
Date



Area Manager, Albuquerque Area Office

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AAO-05-002
FONSI Number

BACKGROUND

At the present time, the Rio Grande is eroding the west-side of the levee downstream of the San Acacia Diversion Dam (SADD) at River Miles (RM) 114 and 113. Historically, the river was a wide and braided channel with a sand bed and low banks. The river also experienced larger floods and higher sediment loads. Since the Low Flow Conveyance Channel (LFCC) was built in the 1950s, this section of the river was straightened. In addition, two channel bends were cut off in this section of the river. The river is currently incising, narrowing, coarsening and migrating to the west. The meandering and incising characteristics are causing bank failure and erosion that is threatening the levee at the RM 114 and 113 priority sites.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Only the proposed action (preferred plan) and the no action alternative were evaluated in detail within the Environmental Assessment (EA). The preferred plan consists of constructing a new alignment for the LFCC and its associated levee from a point 1.6 miles downstream from the SADD to a point 3.4 miles downstream from the SADD. The total length of the new alignment would be 10,800 feet. The central segment of the new alignment would cross the San Lorenzo Arroyo. A 9.0 foot diameter reinforced concrete pipe, 584 feet in length would be used to cross the arroyo. A sheetpile drop structure would be constructed in the arroyo on the east side of the pipe crossing to stop head cutting of the San Lorenzo Arroyo coming from the direction of the river. Upon completion of the new alignment, the existing alignment would be filled. The river would be allowed to continue its natural westward migration and erode through the existing LFCC and levee.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS RELATED TO THE RESOURCES OF CONCERN

The effects of implementing the proposed action and reasons for a Finding of No Significant Impact are addressed in detail in the EA and summarized below:

Federal and State Listed Species – Site surveys did not reveal the presence of any Federally threatened or endangered species in the vicinity of the project area. No in-stream activities are planned for this project and no Rio Grande Silvery Minnows have been found in the LFCC in the project area during surveys in 2004. There would be no affect to federal or state listed threatened or endangered species and no destruction or adverse modification to designated or proposed critical habitat as a result of implementing the preferred plan.

Native Vegetation – The near term loss of vegetation that would result from implementing the preferred plan would be offset by the long term creation of enhanced habitat and in the short term through revegetation and reseeding efforts in the river's floodplain and in the existing LFCC. These efforts would result in the overall improvement of the natural condition of the floodplain.

Noxious Weeds – Implementation of the preferred plan has the potential to result in the introduction and establishment of state listed and other noxious weeds; however, an aggressive revegetation plan combined with thorough cleaning of all equipment before arriving on site would minimize that potential. Reclamation would monitor the project area during construction (3-5 years) for noxious weeds and would treat them as necessary.

Erosion Control and Water Quality – During construction, the use of Best Management Practices would contain most runoff within the San Lorenzo Basin. The reestablishment of native vegetation in the project area, following construction, would ultimately reduce the area's contribution to turbidity in the Rio Grande.

Air Quality – The project area is surrounded by farmland that is tilled and planted annually. Fugitive dust from construction activities would be minimized by the application of water to disturbed areas where equipment is being used during dry periods. Fugitive dust from the implementation of the preferred plan would not be expected to result in adverse effects to the air quality of the area, particularly within the context of the surrounding land use.

Cultural and Archaeological Resources, and Sacred Sites – Although the LFCC and associated levee are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the SHPO has concurred with the report by Bischoff (2001) that serves as mitigation for any adverse effects that may occur as a result of modification of the LFCC. No sacred sites or traditional cultural properties are expected in the project area; however, should consultation with the tribes result in the identification of any such sites or properties, then Reclamation would consult with tribe(s) concerned to ensure no adverse effects result from the proposed action.

Indian Trust Assets – There are no native American Indian Trust lands or assets in the vicinity of the proposed project site.

Environmental Justice – Implementing the preferred plan would result in no adverse effects to minority or low-income populations.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

The environmental commitments to minimize potential adverse effects listed in Chapter 2, Section 2.7 of the EA will be implemented during construction activities and as part of the post construction site restoration activities associated with the preferred plan.

COORDINATION

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was notified regarding the proposed action and Federally protected species potentially occurring in the project area were identified. The New Mexico Environment Department was consulted regarding Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 compliance. The Army Corps of Engineers was consulted regarding CWA Section 404 permitting and compliance. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, New Mexico Species of Concern website (NMDG&F, 2004) was consulted to determine if any state protected animal species could potentially occur in the project area. The New Mexico Rare Plants website (NMRPTC, 1999) was consulted to determine if any state protected plant species might occur in the project area. The New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer was consulted by Reclamation to determine project compliance with state and federal laws (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) pertaining to cultural and archaeological resources in the project area. Native American tribes were consulted with by Reclamation regarding sacred sites and traditional cultural properties. The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) was consulted to ensure the proposed action would not affect their activities.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, and based on the analysis in the EA, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has determined that implementing the preferred plan presented in the EA for San Acacia Priority Sites, River Miles 114 and 113 would not result in a significant impact on the human environment and does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.