

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

COLUMBIA STOCK RANCH SECTION ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION SECTION 536 PROJECT COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON DESIGN ANALYSIS REPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District (Corps), in cooperation with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), has conducted an environmental assessment, dated 1 July 2016, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321–4347 (NEPA), which is incorporated herein by reference. The environmental assessment analyzed the effects of actions described in the Columbia Stock Ranch Ecosystem Restoration Project Design Analysis Report, dated 12 April 2016, for the Columbia Stock Ranch Section 536 Project. The Design Analysis Report is incorporated herein by reference. The recommended plan includes restoration of approximately 342 acres of floodplain habitat in the lower Columbia River and estuary. The restoration measures include the following:

- Acquisition of lands, easements and rights of way from land owners, the Deer Island Diking District, utilities, Portland & Western Railroad and the Oregon Department of Transportation for all actions associated with staging, access and construction;
- Removal of a vacant home, barn, outbuildings, and fences;
- Construction of a setback levee, seepage berms, and reinstallation of a tide gate at Tide Creek;
- Modification to the existing flood control levee, including three (3) breaches and lowering the remaining elevation to approximately 15 feet (North American Vertical Datum of 1988);
- Installation of two (2) bridges in the railroad embankment, spanning the existing waterways;
- Excavation of tidal channels, marsh and wetland habitats, and an overflow channel;
- Grading select portions of upland areas below the two-year flood elevation and filling an agricultural drainage ditch;
- Removal of existing culvert, and channel-spanning cattle grates in Tide Creek;
- Removal of culvert in existing access road and grade road to match adjacent topography; and
- Invasive species removal, and planting native vegetation.

In addition to the “no action” alternative, six alternatives with varying levels of restoration were evaluated, including the recommended plan. The recommended plan was identified as the National Environmental Restoration (NER) plan, the environmentally preferred alternative, and the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative that accomplishes all the project objectives. All practicable means to avoid and minimize adverse environmental effects have been incorporated into the recommended plan. The restoration of off-channel, aquatic, riparian, and wetland habitats, providing hydrologic connectivity and fish access to the project site, will restore natural floodplain processes and ecological functions. No compensatory mitigation is required.

The Corps is currently seeking a fill permit from the Oregon DSL for the discharge of materials into waters of the state. The Corps submitted an application to Oregon DSL on 3 June 2016, and provided additional information on 27 June 2016. Discussions with Oregon DSL indicate that a permit can be expected in August 2016.

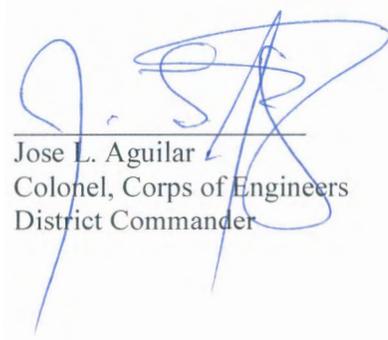
The recommended plan will benefit multiple fish and wildlife species, including species listed under

the Endangered Species Act of 1973, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1531–1544 (ESA). In accordance with the ESA, as amended, the Corps has coordinated with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for use and application of the Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species V programmatic biological opinion (SLOPES BiOp), issued on March 19, 2013. The SLOPES BiOp authorizes certain stream restoration activities and fish passage improvement actions which are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of federally-listed species or modify designated critical habitat. On 10 June 2015, NMFS initially confirmed that the recommended plan can be covered under the SLOPES BiOp. Documentation from NMFS confirming applicability of this project under SLOPES was received on July 5, 2016. All terms and conditions resulting from this consultation shall be implemented in order to minimize impacts to endangered species.

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 16 U.S.C. § 470 *et seq.*, as amended, the Corps determined that historic properties may be adversely affected by the recommended plan. On-going coordination between the Corps and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer will result in a memorandum of agreement to mitigate for any adverse effects. All terms and conditions resulting from this agreement shall be implemented in order to minimize and mitigate for adverse impacts to historic properties.

Technical, environmental, and economic criteria were used in the formulation and evaluation of alternative plans. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in the evaluation of the alternatives. It is my determination that the recommended plan does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the human or natural environment; therefore preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to Section 102(C) of NEPA is not required.

Date: 20160706



Jose L. Aguilar
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander