

U.S. Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Albuquerque Area Office
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Rio Grande Nature Center Habitat Restoration Project
Bernalillo County, New Mexico**

Lee Robertson
Manager, Environment Division

2/2/07
Date

for *Steve Hansen*
Area Manager, Albuquerque Area Office

2/7/07
Date

AAO-07-009
FONSI Number

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) prepared a final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4331-4335) on December 12, 2006. The USACE has proposed to restore an existing side channel and reconnect portions of the bosque to the Rio Grande in the vicinity of the Rio Grande Nature Center in order to reestablish predominantly native habitat that would benefit both the Rio Grande silvery minnow and the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. A total of as many as four embayments would be constructed and a new channel would also be constructed at the northern end of the project site. Prior to the excavation of the channel, about 15 acres of dead woody vegetation and live non-native vegetation would be removed by manual and or mechanical treatment. It is anticipated that 5 acres would be reseeded with a "Bosque seed mix" and seven acres of native vegetation would be established. In addition, monitoring for a period of at least 10 years, for use by Rio Grande silvery minnow eggs, larvae and adults, sediment accumulation, amongst other parameters would be accomplished. Adaptive management techniques and periodic maintenance of the channel would be performed.

This work would be performed as part of the implementation of the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative in the March 2003 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biological Opinion on the Bureau of Reclamation's Water and River Maintenance Operations, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Flood Control Operations, and Related Non-Federal Actions on the Middle Rio Grande, New Mexico, 2003 (USFWS 2003) and to address priority habitat restoration goals of the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Act Collaborative Program (Collaborative Program). Under the Collaborative Program, both governmental and nongovernmental entities work cooperatively to address Endangered Species Act issues in the Middle Rio Grande. The Collaborative Program has approved funding for the project at \$150,000, through Reclamation as the federal funding agency. Restoration of riverine habitats that support the silvery minnow is considered to be an essential element for recovering the species.

It was determined by the USACE that the proposed project would result in only minor and temporary adverse impacts on soils, water quality, air quality and noise levels, aesthetics, vegetation, floodplain, fish and wildlife, and recreational resources during construction. The USACE also concluded that the long-term benefits of the proposed project would outweigh these short-term adverse impacts. These benefits include aesthetics, vegetation, fish and wildlife, endangered species, recreational resources and cumulative effects.

All applicable permits will be obtained prior to implementation of the project, including but not limited to:

- Landowner access permissions
- Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 404
- State Water Quality Certification under CWA, Section 401
- Office of the State Engineer permits, as applicable
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit
- Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans

Agencies and other entities that USACE contacted formally or informally to coordinate efforts in preparation of this EA included:

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

City of Albuquerque
Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
New Mexico Environment Department
New Mexico State Parks – Rio Grande Nature Center State Park
Hopi Tribe
Isleta Pueblo
Laguna Pueblo
Navajo Nation
New Mexico State Historic Preservation Division
Sandia Pueblo
White Mountain Apache Tribe
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

CONCLUSION

Reclamation is adopting this EA prepared by the USACE and concurs with the impact analysis that was performed. Based on the analysis performed by the USACE in the environmental assessment, no significant adverse impacts to the natural or human environment would result from implementation of the Project. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was determined pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321et seq.) It was been determined that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared for this Project.