

Mid-Pacific Region
Sacramento, Calif.

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Draft Environmental Assessment Available for Trap and Transport of Juvenile Salmon in the San Joaquin River

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - The Bureau of Reclamation today released draft environmental documents on a proposed trap-and-haul study to move juvenile fall-run Chinook salmon downstream of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program's Restoration Area, where no migration barriers exist.

The effort would evaluate the success and feasibility of implementing similar rapid response actions in the future, and monitor fish movements in certain areas of the San Joaquin River during a "Critical Low" hydrologic water-year, as defined by the Restoration Settlement, where no flow pulses are available to cue juvenile salmon to downstream migration in already low water conditions.

The proposed action supports the Restoration Settlement by taking adaptive management action to respond to unsuitable environmental conditions. In the fall of 2013, more than 360 adult fall run were translocated into the upper river and nearly 70 spawning redds (nests where eggs were laid) were documented. The successful outmigration of juvenile salmon is critical for survival to adulthood and to support the goal of the Restoration Program to restore Chinook salmon to the San Joaquin River. Factors determining successful outmigration include suitable water temperatures, adequate and timely flow for downstream movement, and a passable watercourse, none of which are available in some of the reaches of the Restoration Area due to the "Critical Low" hydrologic water year. If successful, similar actions could be used in the future with salmon in critical low hydrologic water years.

To capture fish, temporary fence weirs would be installed in three locations on the San Joaquin River: Within 1 mile downstream of the Highway 41 Bridge, Scout Island, and within 1 mile downstream of the Highway 99 Bridge.

The fence weirs would be constructed from bank to bank, using wire mesh panels and supporting metal posts leading to a collection box. In addition, entrainment-type netting may be installed at a single location upstream of proposed weir locations, either at Donnie Bridge or Ledger Island Bridge. The entrainment-type nets are attached to steel frames that are guided horizontally in steel channels so they can be fished daily and removed when not in use.

Temporary fish collection structures will include flashing lights, and flagging to alert boaters. Temporary fence weirs will include a removable panel marked with bright paint and signage to direct boaters and allow for boat passage. Reclamation will place signage to alert boaters of the temporary fish collection structures upstream and downstream of the temporary fish collection structures, and at Fresno Sportsmen's Club, Fort Washington Campground, Sycamore Island, and Friant Dam Landing.

Reclamation is coordinating with local stakeholders to better determine the potential level of impact, given the anticipated low-water levels during the period of the proposed action, and then assessing potential impact minimization measures.

Juvenile fall-run Chinook salmon trap and haul activities would occur from mid-February through May, depending on hydrologic conditions. Following completion of the study, fish collection structures would be removed.

The Draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact were prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and are available at http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_projdetails.cfm?Project_ID=16361 . If you encounter problems accessing the documents, please call 916-978-5100 (TTY 916-978-5608) or email mppublicaffairs@usbr.gov.

Written comments should be sent to Rebecca Victorine, Bureau of Reclamation, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825. Comments may be emailed to rvictorine@usbr.gov, or faxed to 916-978-5469. Comments must be received by close of business Wednesday, February 12, 2014.

For additional information about the study or to request a copy of the Draft EA and/or FONSI, please contact Margaret Gidding, 916-978-5461, or mgidding@usbr.gov. Copies of the document may also be viewed at Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Regional office at the above address.

For more information about the SJRRP, please visit www.restoresjr.net.

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