

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Implementation of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Agreement for the Yakima Nation

October 25, 2005

Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) has prepared a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to evaluate the environmental consequences associated with implementing the Yakama Nation (YN) Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Agreement

The purpose of the YN CREP is to enhance the water quality and quantity of Yakama Reservation (YR) by reducing the amount of nutrients, sediments, and chemical runoff from agriculture sources while increasing wildlife and wetland habitat for birds, migrating waterfowl, and other aquatic organisms.

On the YR, nearly 20,000 acres of agricultural land lies fallow and has become weed-infested, causing multiple problems for the YN. The YN CREP targets 5,000 acres for implementation of approved FSA conservation practices (CPs) designed to improve the water quality of discharge from agricultural lands while enhancing wildlife and wetland habitat for game and non-game bird species and improving the habitat for aquatic species including important salmonid species. The primary goal of the YN CREP agreement is to provide an opportunity, through financial and technical assistance to eligible producers in the YR, to voluntarily establish wetland habitat, erosion controls, filter strips, buffers, wildlife habitat, grass waterways, and other approved practices that improve the water quality of agricultural runoff.

In addition, implementing CREP could have the following benefits:

- Improve surface water quality and improve groundwater quality
- Enhance and conserve the diversity of wildlife including threatened and endangered (T&E) species
- Improve soil quality
- Improve wildlife and water based recreation such as fishing and hunting
- Decrease the cost of noxious weed and invasive species control
- Provide economic benefits to the producer

Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative is also the proposed action alternative. The primary goal of the YN CREP is to provide financial and technical assistance to eligible producers within targeted areas on the reservation. This assistance will help to establish permanent native grass, permanent wildlife habitat, field windbreaks, grass waterways, wildlife food plots, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration, marginal pastureland wildlife habitat buffers, erosion control structures, and marginal pastureland wetland buffers.

Reasons for Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

In consideration of the analysis documented in the PEA and the reasons outlined in this FONSI, the preferred alternative would not constitute a major State or Federal action that would significantly affect the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. The determination is based on the following:

1. The preferred alternative as outlined in the PEA would improve wildlife habitat, increase species viability, and improve ecotourism associated with wildlife. The potential effects of implementation of the preferred alternative will be improving wildlife resources.
2. Both beneficial and adverse impacts of implementing the preferred alternative have been fully considered within the PEA. The beneficial impacts outweigh any adverse impacts. Adverse cumulative impacts are expected to be minor as implementation of the preferred alternative will cause very little if any adverse impact on the area and the human environment.
3. The preferred alternative would not significantly affect public health or safety. Implementation of the preferred alternative would improve wildlife resources and community wildlife related economics in 17 counties.
4. The preferred alternative would not significantly affect any unique characteristics which includes historic and cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.
5. The preferred alternative does not involve effects to the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial.
6. The preferred alternative would not impose highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
7. The preferred alternative would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The intended outcome of the preferred alternative is to improve wildlife habitat, increase species viability, and improve wildlife related economics. Any future projects that are similar in nature will need to be reviewed

on a case-by-case basis to determine their individual potential for impacts on the human environment.

8. The preferred alternative is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts. The Environmental Consequences section of the PEA discusses potential cumulative impacts of implementing the preferred alternative. Cumulative impacts of implementing the preferred alternative were determined to not be significant.
9. The preferred alternative would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
10. The preferred alternative would not have adverse effects on threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat. In accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the effects of implementing the preferred alternative on threatened and endangered species and designated critical habitat were addressed in the PEA. Informal consultation with the U.S. Fish Wildlife Service was completed on a programmatic level. Further consultation will occur as necessary for individual contracts.
11. The preferred alternative does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Determination

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and FSA's Environmental regulations at 7 CFR part 799 implementing the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality, 40 CFR parts 1500-1508, I find that neither the proposed action nor any of the alternatives is a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, no environmental impact statement will be prepared.

APPROVED:

On-File

10-25-2005

Signature

Date (MM-DD-YYYY)

James F. Fitzgerald

Name (Typed or Printed)

Washington State Environmental Director

Title