

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION
SIERRA NEVADA REGION**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Keswick, Shasta, and Whiskeytown Fault Trenching Study – Group 1 Project
Shasta County, California
DOE/EA-2169**

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

In July 2021 the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Keswick, Shasta, and Whiskeytown Fault Trenching Study – Group 1 (CGB-EA-2021) and released the draft to the public on July 9, 2021. Reclamation approved the Final EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on August 3, 2021.

Reclamation is the lead federal agency for this federal action, and the Bureau of Land Management and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) are designated cooperating agencies, pursuant to 40 CFR 1501.8. Under the regulations, Reclamation recognizes that WAPA has special expertise/jurisdiction by law as it relates to various aspects of the planning effort for this project. WAPA has prepared this FONSI to document WAPA’s review of their action as a cooperating agency to this EA.

RECLAMATION’S PROPOSED ACTION

Reclamation’s Technical Service Center proposes to conduct a study to obtain data from previously unstudied seismic faults in the Keswick, Whiskeytown, and Shasta areas within Shasta County and Tehama County. Reclamation proposes to obtain this data by conducting trenching along identified fault lines. Trenching will allow Reclamation to study a fault’s geologic seismic history, including the frequency and magnitude of historic seismic activity. Studying the trenches will involve visual observations and core sampling.

Reclamation would conduct trenching at 8 sites and conduct visual observations and core sampling at each trench, gaining knowledge of the previous geologic seismic history of the area. WAPA owns the land at one of the sites, TS01, which is WAPA’s Keswick Substation, located approximately 4 miles west of Redding, CA, on the east side of the Sacramento River. The trenching location TS01 is in a relatively level and undisturbed location adjacent to a powerline access road. WAPA towers and transmission lines are located about 200 feet north of the site, with non-WAPA distribution lines closer to the site.

RECLAMATION FINDINGS

Reclamation requested informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on May 7, 2021 in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (17 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), and on June 7, 2021 received a concurrence letter on Reclamation's determination that the project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, California red-legged frog, and western distinct population segment of the yellow-billed cuckoo. Reclamation identified one historic property within the area of potential effect and applied the criteria of adverse effects for the proposed undertaking and found that it will result in no adverse effects to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.5(b). Pursuant to 36 CFR § 800, Reclamation, initiated consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer on a determination of no adverse effect. Pursuant to the regulations at 36 CFR §800.5(c) Reclamation as lead agency for NEPA completed the Section 106 process and found the proposed action would have no significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places.

Based on the attached EA Reclamation finds that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. WAPA concurs with this assessment. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46). Following are the reasons why the impacts of the Proposed Action are not significant, with respect to the affected environment and degree of effects of the action (40 CFR 1501.3(b)).

1. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1501.3(b)(2)(iii)).
2. The Proposed Action will not violate federal, state, tribal, or local law protecting the environment (40 CFR 1501.3(b)(2)(iv)).
3. The Proposed Action will not affect any Indian Trust Assets (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum – July 2, 1993).
4. Implementing the Proposed Action will not disproportionately affect minorities or low income populations and communities (EO 12898 – February 11, 1994).
5. The Proposed Action will not limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007 – May 24, 1996 and 512 DM 3 – June 5, 1998).

AGENCY CONSULTATIONS

Pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), Reclamation led consultation efforts with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on potential impacts from the project to threatened and endangered species.

Reclamation prepared a Biological Assessment (BA) and submitted the BA to USFWS on May 7, 2021, requesting concurrence with Reclamation's assessment that this action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the valley elderberry longhorn beetle (VELB), California Red-legged frog (CRLF), and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Reclamation completed informal consultation with the USFWS and received a letter of concurrence on June 7, 2021. The letter of concurrence includes several species-specific mitigation measures that were included within the BA. WAPA and Reclamation consulted informally with USFWS and determined that WAPA's review of the BA and determination it adequately covered WAPA's area of responsibility for Endangered Species Act compliance would meet WAPA's requirement for consultation. WAPA reviewed and accepted the findings in the BA.

No impacts to fishes or species that utilize wetlands, swales, streams, vernal pools, and other waters of the U.S. is expected. All of the trenching sites occur in Northern Californian oak woodland, oak savanna, or annual grassland habitats. The trenching site locations were chosen to avoid direct impacts to any riparian areas or wetlands. Therefore, pursuant to Executive Order (EO) 11990 for protection of wetlands, the proposed action would avoid long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands.

Pursuant to 36 CFR § 800, Reclamation as lead federal agency for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) must complete the identification and evaluation process through consultation with federally recognized tribes and interested parties, evaluate resources for their eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and, as necessary, assess adverse effects and make a determination. In accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA, Reclamation conducted consultations with Native American tribes on May 3, 2021, and the State Historic Preservation Office on July 1, 2021. Reclamation conducted a cultural resources inventory, which included a records search at the California Historic Information Services, a review of archival information, and a pedestrian survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). Reclamation completed the Section 106 consultation as lead agency on August 2, 2021 and determined there were no significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

PUBLIC SCOPING

The Draft EA was first made available to interested agencies, tribes, groups, and individuals on July 7, 2021 and the comment period ended on July 30, 2021.

WAPA'S PROPOSED FEDERAL ACTION

WAPA is a cooperating agency to the EA. Upon completion of the final EA and publication of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), WAPA would issue a letter of concurrence to Reclamation for conducting the seismic study at location TS01 with WAPA's conditions for working around the nearby transmission lines and tower.

Based on the information contained in the EA, WAPA's federal action would not result in significant environmental impacts. WAPA has determined that the proposed federal action described above does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of

the human environment within the jurisdiction of NEPA; therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and WAPA is issuing this FONSI. The Final EA is approved concurrently with this FONSI.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Copies of the EA and this FONSI are available to all interested parties and the public from the following contact:

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A copy of the Final EA is available at the Bureau of Reclamation website at:
<https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa>

For further information on the DOE NEPA process, contact:

Mr. Brian Costner, Director
Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance, GC-54
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585
Phone: (202) 586-9924 or (800) 472-2756

DETERMINATION

Based on the information contained in the EA, WAPA's federal action would not result in significant environmental impacts. WAPA has determined that its proposed federal action is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and WAPA is issuing this FONSI.

Sonja A. Anderson
Senior Vice President and
Sierra Nevada Regional Manager
Western Area Power Administration
U.S. Department of Energy

Date