

Summary Form for Electronic Document Submittal

Form F

Lead agencies may include 15 hardcopies of this document when submitting electronic copies of Environmental Impact Reports, Negative Declarations, Mitigated Negative Declarations, or Notices of Preparation to the State Clearinghouse (SCH). The SCH also accepts other summaries, such as EIR Executive Summaries prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15123. Please include one copy of the Notice of Completion Form (NOC) with your submission and attach the summary to each electronic copy of the document.

SCH #: _____

2019049033

Project Title: Dry Meadow Restoration ProjectLead Agency: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control BoardContact Name: Debra MahnkeEmail: Debra.Mahnke@waterboards.ca.govPhone Number: (559) 445-6281Project Location: Sequoia National Forest, Western Divide Ranger DistrictTulare*City**County*

Project Description (Proposed actions, location, and/or consequences).

The Dry Meadow project encompasses a 65-acre complex of meadows in the headwaters of Bull Run Creek, tributary to the North Fork Kern River located approximately 8 air miles northwest of Kernville, CA. The goal of the project is to improve the hydrologic connectivity and processes in the meadow complex in order to restore the physical and biological functions of the meadow, including flood flow access to the meadow floodplain, and restoration of the drainage regime, including sheet flow. The proposed project design would restore channel flow to existing remnant channels on the surface of the meadow floodplain by partially plugging the existing incised channels. 26,000 cubic yards of native soil material, cut from slopes on the meadow edge, and within the meadow itself, would be used to construct 19 gully plugs (4.84 acres). The base elevation of the restored channels would be anchored with a 0.17-acre grade control at the bottom of the meadow, using 1,000 cubic yards of imported rock. The design would result in 8.34 acres of ponded water in the 17 meadow borrow sites, which would seasonally rise and fall with groundwater elevations. Plug surfaces are ripped to a depth of 12 inches, and topped with stockpiled topsoil, and then seeded with natives and mulched. All native vegetation recovered from the fill and borrow sites is transplanted to plug edges, surfaces, and key locations on the remnant channel. A temporary fence would be installed around the restoration site to allow vegetation to recover and exclude livestock for two to three years. Alternative 1 includes hand-thinning of conifers (less than 10 inches in diameter) along meadow margins in designated upland areas.

Identify the project's significant or potentially significant effects and briefly describe any proposed mitigation measures that would reduce or avoid that effect.

Air quality - Soil-disturbing activities have the potential to generate fugitive dust PM10 emissions. Mitigations: Construction areas, unpaved roads, and disturbed surface areas would be watered to suppress dust; disturbed areas would be revegetated with transplants, and locally collected seeds and mulch.

Biological Resources - Short-term negative effects on special status species, including 8 terrestrial species (2 state and 1 federal endangered- great gray owl, little willow flycatcher, CA condor) and 7 aquatic species (1 federal and state endangered- mtn yellow-legged frog) from heavy equipment used to cut and place native soil fill material and imported rock has the potential to crush individuals, remove microhabitats in the ground, and disturb species in the area with noise and activity. Mitigations: Limited operating period (construction would occur after Aug 15), surveying for, and avoiding potentially affected species (before and during construction); use of BMPs, design criteria, and USFWS Programmatic Biological Opinion Conservation Measures and Terms and Conditions for mtn yellow-legged frog.

Geology/Soils - Disturbed areas (cut and fill) would be susceptible to erosion before vegetation becomes re-established, particularly in the first winter after construction. Mitigation: Work would occur during low flow period; restricted/minimized equip travel, staging and haul routes; revegetation and mulching of disturbed areas, including retention of topsoil and transplanting existing vegetation; 3 yrs monitoring of revegetation, and replanting of areas where survival does not meet cover criteria; temporary fencing of site and 2-3 yrs exclusion of grazing until stabilizing vegetation is established.

(continued on attached page)

If applicable, describe any of the project's areas of controversy known to the Lead Agency, including issues raised by agencies and the public.

Two substantial issues were identified during the project NEPA public scoping period.

1. Pondered water in the meadow floodplain: The project design utilized borrow material outside of the meadow to the greatest extent possible to minimize borrow sites in the floodplain. Proposed borrow sites that would fill with pondered water were designed to have the least ecologically negative, and the greatest positive, impact possible. All plugs and ponds were configured to accommodate surface and subsurface through flow, as well as adjacent hillslope-generated surface and groundwater inflows. Natural infilling of ponds would occur over time (decades or longer) from material mobilized from flood events. Re-entry post-restoration to fill borrow sites is unfeasible because meadow conditions are expected to be wetter and not conducive for use of heavy equipment without causing significant damage, and availability of native fill material would still be an issue. Native fill is desirable because of its compatibility with onsite conditions (soil porosity, compaction levels, and seed sources); it diminishes opportunity for introduction of non-native species like noxious weeds; and it makes project implementation economically feasible. Water levels within the floodplain borrow sites would reflect the rise and fall of the groundwater elevation. Some may maintain perennially pondered water or may seasonally dry out. There is already an existing pond site from the historic saw mill. Pondered water in the floodplain created from borrow sites is similar to naturally created ponds from beaver activity. Presence of beavers and their channel damming activities has been documented on similar meadow restoration projects in the northern Sierras. Concerns with non-native species, such as bullfrogs, inhabiting the ponds is unlikely in Dry Meadow because they typically do not occur at higher elevations and cold winter temps and short seasons would likely result in two yrs for tadpoles to metamorphose, making them susceptible to predation; distance and steep terrain makes natural colonization unlikely, and the remote location makes human introduction unlikely. Design criteria includes annual bullfrog surveys.

2. Potential negative impacts to restored meadows from livestock grazing.

This was addressed through the inclusion of temporary fencing for 2-3 years after project construction to rest the meadow from livestock use until stabilizing vegetation is well established. When livestock are re-introduced after the rest period, grazing allotment Annual Operating Instructions would include protections needed to sustain stabilizing riparian vegetation. Design criteria includes continued monitoring of grazing in the restored meadow.

Provide a list of the responsible or trustee agencies for the project.

USDA Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest - NEPA Lead Agency, Project Applicant
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board - CEQA Lead Agency, 401 Water Quality Certification permit
Trout Unlimited - non-governmental organization Project Partner