

**DRAFT**  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**  
*and*  
**FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE (FONPA)**  
**Fish Passage and Habitat Improvements to Dry Creek**  
**Yuba and Nevada Counties, California**

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S. Code 4321 et seq.); the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500–1508; and USAF policy and procedures (32 CFR Part 989); an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for fish passage and habitat improvements at Beale Air Force Base (AFB) and surrounding areas in Yuba and Nevada counties, California. The EA is also intended to comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code 21000-21177) and the Guidelines for CEQA (Sections 15000-15387, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3) for the purposes of fulfilling state permitting requirements. Pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, title 14, sections 15220 and following, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, as lead agency under CEQA, intends to rely on the EA and FONSI in the place of a mitigated negative declaration and believes that the federal documents meet the requirements of CEQA. The EA is incorporated by reference into this finding per 40 CFR 1508.13 and 40 CFR 1502.21.

**PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to reduce the United States Air Force (USAF) liability associated with aging dam infrastructure and to improve fish passage and create spawning habitat for anadromous salmonids in Dry Creek including Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and the federally threatened Central Valley steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*).

The Proposed Action is needed for multiple reasons: dam liability, poor fish passage, and nonviable fish spawning habitat. Beale Lake Dam on Beale AFB is not structurally secure. A 2016 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) study found Beale Lake Dam to have an overall condition of “poor.” Currently, the dam’s right abutment is compromised and unstable, and the left abutment is undermined. USACE recommends that USAF implement strategies to improve the safety of the dam structure. The USAF does not require a lake or dam to meet its current mission. The long-term maintenance of the dam, and the potential liability for the dam’s failure, present an unacceptable risk. Further, the cost to safely maintain the dam is substantial.

The Proposed Action is also needed because two fish passage barriers in Dry Creek (River Mile [RM] 6.2 Low Flow Crossing and Beale Lake Dam) currently impede the upstream migration of adult salmonids. A fish ladder is present at Beale Lake Dam; however, the fish ladder is undersized and inhibits passage of anadromous salmonids across a wide range of flows due to excessive turbulence. In addition, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has identified that the potential spawning areas located upstream of Beale Lake Dam do not represent viable spawning habitat and need to be enhanced for the project to be successful at improving anadromous fish production.

## DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### Preferred Alternative

#### RM 6.2 Low Flow Crossing

Under the Preferred Alternative, the RM 6.2 Low Flow Crossing would be removed by excavating the existing slab and rebar, and the associated materials would be transported offsite for recycling at an approved facility. Construction activities would generally involve ground disturbance by heavy construction equipment such as backhoes, bulldozers, graders, wheel rollers, and dump trucks. Should any sediment be removed during construction, it will be reused to the extent practicable in the final design or hauled off site and disposed of in accordance with state and federal regulations. A potential disposal facility includes the Ostrom Road Landfill in Wheatland, California (approximately 4 miles northeast of RM 6.2). Concrete removed from the channel would be hauled off site and recycled at a local recycling facility. Dewatering would involve mechanical dredging or related equipment or procedures (pumps, cofferdams, siphons, dewatering areas, etc.). After removal of the barrier, a low flow stream channel would be installed. The resulting channel would be graded to match the grade immediately upstream and downstream of the existing slab. It is anticipated that the disturbed areas outside of the stream bed and existing roads would be seeded following construction with an appropriate stabilizing seed mixture. The seed mixture would meet Beale AFB standards and would be free from noxious weeds.

#### Beale Lake Dam and Beale Lake Falls

Under the Preferred Alternative, Beale Lake Dam and the existing fish ladder would be fully removed, and Beale Lake would be restored to a free-flowing stream. All exposed portions of the abandoned sewer line located downstream of the dam would also be removed.

Dam removal would include the use of heavy construction equipment such as backhoes, bulldozers, graders, wheel rollers, and dump trucks and installation of a temporary culvert at an adjacent intermittent stream. No explosives would be utilized. Sediment blocked by the dam would be removed and reused to support project designs. Concrete removed from the dam structure and channel would be hauled off site and recycled at a local recycling facility. Dewatering may involve mechanical dredging or related equipment or procedures (pumps, cofferdams, siphons, dewatering areas, etc.). The footbridge crossing Beale Lake and Beale Lake Dam would be retained.

Following removal of Beale Lake Dam, the lakebed would be restored to a stream channel. This stream channel would be comprised of adequately sized rock, similar in character to the natural streambed, to help stabilize the lakebed. The channel would also include a low flow channel designed to provide fish passage and habitat under seasonal low flow periods. The upper portion of the restored stream channel would include larger rock to help facilitate fish passage and prevent erosion in the area of Beale Lake Falls.

### Gravel Injection Sites

Under the Preferred Alternative, gravel injections would occur at four locations upstream from Beale Lake Dam. These gravel injections would occur outside of the natural low flow channel of Dry Creek, which would allow the gravel material to be naturally distributed downstream of the injection sites during high flow events. A total of approximately 2,000 tons of 0.25- to 5-inch spawning gravel would be equally distributed between the four dump sites. This material would be deposited in the selected locations by dump trucks. It is not anticipated that any grading, tree clearing, or other site alterations would be necessary for the trucks to access these locations. The deposited gravel material would create viable spawning beds as the material washes downstream and naturally settles in the stream channel. Given the uncertainty of where the spawning gravel may deposit, post-project monitoring would be conducted by USFWS to assess gravel mobility and fate. USFWS anticipates that these gravel injections would create spawning beds comprised of suitable grain size and properties to support spawning of anadromous salmonids in Dry Creek. The placement of gravel in the stream as part of this project would be a one-time event. Long-term monitoring by USFWS would determine if additional gravel injections would be necessary in the future to maintain the spawning habitat.

### **No Action Alternative**

#### RM 6.2 Low Flow Crossing

Under the No Action Alternative, the RM 6.2 Low Flow Crossing would not be removed. This barrier would continue to hinder the upstream migration of anadromous salmonids.

#### Beale Lake Dam and Beale Lake Falls

Under the No Action Alternative, Beale Lake Dam would not be removed and fish passage past Beale Lake Falls would not be enhanced. Beale Lake Dam would continue to impede upstream migration of anadromous salmonids. In June 2016, USACE inspected Beale Lake Dam and stated the dam's overall condition as "poor." They noted that the right dam abutment was compromised and not stable, and the left abutment was undermined. Beale Lake Dam's structural condition would continue to deteriorate and eventually fail or require significant efforts to address its structural deficiencies. The exposed and abandoned sewer pipe would remain.

### Gravel Injection Sites

Under the No Action Alternative, gravel spawning beds would not be enhanced through a series of gravel injections. These potential spawning areas would remain non-viable habitat for spawning salmonids. In addition, as neither the RM 6.2 Low Flow Crossing nor Beale Lake Dam would be removed under this alternative, anadromous fish would not be able to access these potential spawning areas.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### Comparison of Environmental Consequences

Resource Area	Preferred Alternative	No Action Alternative
Noise	Short-term, negligible	None – No change
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases	Short-term, negligible	None – No change
Land Use, Agriculture, Recreation, and Aesthetics	<i>Land Use:</i> None – No change <i>Agriculture:</i> None – No change <i>Recreation:</i> Short-term, minor, adverse Long-term, negligible <i>Aesthetics:</i> Short-term, minor, adverse Long-term, beneficial	<i>Land Use:</i> None – No change <i>Agriculture:</i> None – No change <i>Recreation:</i> None – No change <i>Aesthetics:</i> None – Long-term, minor, adverse
Geologic, Mineral, and Soil Resources	<i>Soils:</i> Long-term, minor, adverse <i>Minerals:</i> None – No change <i>Geology:</i> Negligible <i>Topography:</i> No impact	None – No change
Water Resources	<i>Surface Water:</i> Short-term, minor, adverse Long-term, beneficial <i>Groundwater:</i> Long-term, negligible <i>Wetlands:</i> Long-term, minor, adverse <i>Floodplains:</i> None – No change	<i>Surface Water:</i> Long-term, minor, adverse <i>Groundwater:</i> None – No change <i>Wetlands:</i> Long-term, minor, adverse <i>Floodplain:</i> None – No change
Coastal Zone Management	None – No change	None – No change
Biological Resources	<i>Vegetation:</i> Short-term, minor, adverse Long-term, moderate, adverse Long-term, beneficial <i>Wildlife:</i> Short-term, minor, adverse Long-term, moderate, adverse Long-term, beneficial <i>Threatened and Endangered Species:</i> Short-term, minor, adverse Long-term, minor, adverse Long-term, beneficial	<i>Vegetation:</i> None – No change <i>Wildlife:</i> Long-term, moderate, adverse <i>Threatened and Endangered Species:</i> Long-term, moderate, adverse
Human Health and Safety	Short-term, minor, adverse Short-term, negligible Long-term minor, adverse	Long-term, minor, adverse
Utilities and Infrastructure	Short-term, minor, adverse Long-term, beneficial	Long-term, moderate, adverse
Transportation and Traffic	Short-term, minor, adverse	None – No change
Hazardous Materials and Wastes	Short-term, negligible	None – No change
Socioeconomic Resources, Population, Public Services, and Environmental Justice	<i>Socioeconomics:</i> Short-term, beneficial <i>Population:</i> None – No change <i>Public Service:</i> None – No change <i>Environmental Justice:</i> No impact	None – No change
Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources	None – No change	None – No change
Energy Resources	Long-term, minor, adverse	None – No change
Wildfires	None – No change	None – No change

Unavoidable adverse effects would result from implementation of the Proposed Alternative. These effects are anticipated to be minor.

### Finding of No Practicable Alternative

Executive Order (EO) 11988 requires federal agencies to avoid to the extent possible the long and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of flood plains and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative. After careful review of the attached EA, I have concluded that due to the location of Beale Lake Dam, the RM 6.2 Low Flow Crossing, and gravel injection sites being sited within existing floodplain/wetland boundaries, the project cannot avoid directly impacting floodplains and, therefore, there are no practicable alternatives to demolition and disposition activities within floodplains. All practicable measures will be taken to minimize harm to or within the floodplain; in fact, the Proposed Action will result in a net beneficial impact to floodplains. An early public notice of impacts to wetlands was published in the Appeal-Democrat on 5 September 2019.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

After careful review of the attached EA, I have concluded that the Proposed Action would not have a significant impact either by itself or cumulatively on the quality of the natural or human environment. Therefore, issuance of a FONSI is warranted, and an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report is not required. This analysis fulfills the requirements of NEPA and implementing regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). Accordingly, the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the CEQ, and CFR Title 32, Part 989, Environmental Impact Assessment Process, have been fulfilled, and an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This analysis also fulfills the requirements of CEQA and an Environmental Impact Report is not necessary and will not be prepared.

[SIGNATURE]

[Date]

NAME  
TITLE USAF

[SIGNATURE]

[Date]

NAME  
TITLE USFWS

### **Attachment: Draft Final Environmental Assessment**

**[Preparer's Note:** This FONSI/FONPA will be signed after the public and regulatory comment and review period and final governmental review and analysis.]