


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

TEMPORARY REDUCTION IN WATER DIVERSIONS FROM BATTLE CREEK

Recommended:



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Concur:



Frank Michny, Regional Environmental Officer

Approved:



Robert Stackhouse, Regional Resources Manager

Date:

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FONSI No:

98-14-MP

This Finding on No Significant Impact (FONSI) was prepared for the implementation of temporary reduction in water diversions from Battle Creek to the PG&E Battle Creek Hydroproject facilities. This Environmental Assessment (EA) indicates that no significant environmental impact would occur due to the Proposed Action. No further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation is required for the Proposed Action and all other agency compliance is current and complete.

TEMPORARY REDUCTION IN WATER DIVERSIONS FROM BATTLE CREEK

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and based on the following, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has determined that to compensate the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) to temporarily reduce diversions from Battle Creek to the Battle Creek Hydroelectric Project would not result in a significant impact on the human environment.

The purpose of the proposed temporary reduction in diversions of water from Battle Creek is to provide improved flow conditions in Battle Creek below PG&E's Eagle Canyon and Wildcat Diversions on North Fork Battle Creek, Coleman Diversion on South Fork Battle Creek, and below Asbury Pump on Baldwin Creek, a tributary to Battle Creek. The increased flows are needed to improve emigration, migration, holding, spawning and rearing conditions for spring-run chinook salmon and steelhead anadromous fish species.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Proposed Federal Action is to compensate PG&E for temporarily reducing diversions from Battle Creek and Baldwin Creek to the Battle Creek Project for hydropower generation. The reduced diversions would meet the need to continue increased flows in Battle Creek. Reclamation would compensate PG&E for approximately 3 additional years. Three years is the estimated maximum amount of time it will take for the completion of long-term restoration planning and implementation.

PG&E would maintain an annual minimum flow objective of 30 cfs downstream of the Wildcat and Eagle Canyon diversions on the North Fork of Battle Creek and at the Coleman Diversion on South Fork Battle Creek. As part of the action to achieve 30 cfs in the North Fork, flows from bedrock springs in the vicinity of Eagle Canyon shall enter the creek freely instead of being captured and diverted. PG&E would maintain a flow rate of 30 cfs by decreasing the amount of water it would otherwise divert from Battle Creek into the Battle Creek Project for hydropower generation. In addition, there is a possibility PG&E may decrease diversions at the Asbury Pump Diversion, to provide approximately 5 cfs of flow into Baldwin Creek, a tributary of Battle Creek.

In an effort to share in the implementation of restoration efforts on Battle Creek; PG&E would provide the first 12.5 cfs on both the North and South Fork at no charge to Interior. Therefore, Reclamation would compensate PG&E only for flows at the various diversions described above which are between 12.5cfs and 35cfs (there is a +/- 5 cfs variability around the 30 cfs target flow rate), that would have otherwise resulted in hydropower generation.

Under the No-Action Alternative PG&E would operate the Battle Creek Project pursuant to current operating permits and FERC license. PG&E would maximize diversions from Battle Creek for power generation while maintaining minimum instream flow requirements of 3 cfs required downstream of Eagle Canyon and Wildcat diversions on North Fork Battle Creek and 5 cfs downstream of Coleman Diversion on South Fork Battle Creek. PG&E would continue to pump water from Baldwin Creek in the amounts it has in the past and divert it into the Coleman Canal.

CONCLUSION

The Proposed Action could temporarily improve emigration, migration, holding, spawning and rearing conditions for the spring-run chinook salmon and steelhead anadromous fish species. The action could provide approximately 90 percent of the obtainable habitat values in 17 of the 35 miles within the mainstem, and the North and South Forks of Battle Creek (plus several miles of tributaries accessible for anadromous fish) for approximately the next three years based on the increase in streamflow rates over the No Action alternative. In addition, the Proposed Action could enhance the aquatic habitat, benefiting resident fish species, stream dependent wildlife and riparian vegetation. Federally-listed species would not be adversely affected by the Proposed Action.

Surface water availability in the Battle Creek watershed will not be impacted during the time period of the Proposed Action because the water has historically been diverted through the power generation facilities and returned to the creek. Hence, PG&E does not consumptively use the water. For these same reasons, flows in the Sacramento River also will not change under the Proposed Action as compared to the No-Action Alternative. Since flows in the Sacramento River would not change under the Proposed Action, the Central Valley Project and State Water Project operations would not be impacted.

During the critical hot, dry period occurring in August and September, the Proposed Action decreases the average monthly flow at the Coleman Powerhouse by approximately 15 percent and increases the flow in the creek above the powerhouse by approximately 500 percent. The Coleman Powerhouse Canal (Intake #1) provides the main water supply for the hatchery making the flow reduction a potential temperature concern for the hatchery but not a supply concern because the remaining volume still exceeds the supply needs of the hatchery (USFWS 1997c). However, based on the last three years of temperature monitoring and temperature modeling (Payne and Associates Draft Temperature Model, 1996), there has been no adverse effect to temperature of water from Coleman Canal. In addition, the Proposed Action improves temperature of water available to the hatchery directly from Battle Creek (Intakes #2 and #3).

Power generation in California would not be significantly impacted by the reduction of power generation at the Battle Creek Hydroelectric Project. The Proposed Action would decrease power generation at the Battle Creek Hydroelectric Project, however, the loss would represent less than 0.01 percent of the hydroelectric power generated in California and less than 0.005 percent of all power generated by California.

Environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives will not fall disproportionately on minority and/or low-income members of the community; therefore there are no environmental justice issues associated with either action

There are no impacts to Indian Trust Assets because they do not exist in the project area. There are no impacts to cultural resources because the Proposed Action does not involve removal or modification of structural facilities and the changes in flows are within the range of natural flows.

'Based upon U.S. Geological Survey records for Battle Creek below Coleman Fish Hatchery, near Cottonwood, California (U.S. Geological Survey's Water Data Report CA-94-4, page 136.)

FINDINGS

In accordance with the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of Reclamation has determined that this is not a major Federal Action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an EIS is therefore not required.