

**United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency**

Finding of No Significant Impact

Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program for the
Yakama Nation Wildlife Recreation Enhancement Project

November, 2011

Introduction

The Yakama Nation proposes to utilize United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) funds to implement a non-consumptive recreation program for programs currently managed for public hunting on the Yakama Reservation.

The Yakama Nation's Wildlife, Range, and Vegetation Management Program (WRVMP) has enrolled 21,000 acres of land into the Lower Yakima Valley Wetlands and Riparian Restoration Project and Public Hunting Project. Environmental impacts of management actions on these properties managed by the WRVMP were analyzed under a 1994 Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) with an associated FONSI. The majority of these WRVMP-managed lands and additional idle lands within the agricultural valley portion of the Reservation are seasonally open to the public for small game hunting and fishing, with no other recreational uses currently permitted. The current project would develop a non-consumptive recreational access program within lands managed by the WRVMP and improve quality of recreational and educational opportunities for the Tribal and non-Tribal publics. Non-consumptive activities include hiking, bird watching, and photography.

Proposed Action

The Yakama Nation proposes to use \$428,880 of Farm Service Agency VPA-HIP funding in conjunction with \$194,300 of non-federal funding over a three-year period to enhance the non-consumptive educational and recreational value of Lower Yakima Valley Wetlands and Riparian Restoration Project and Public Hunting Project lands through construction of trails, fences, blinds, boardwalks and interpretive signs, and printing of maps and brochures, and to implement a non-consumptive recreation permit system.

Reasons for Finding of No Significant Impact

In consideration of the analysis documented in the current Project EA and in the 1994 Programmatic EA for the overall Lower Yakima Valley Wetlands and Riparian Restoration Project, the Proposed Action would not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The determination is based on the following:

- 1) Potential beneficial and adverse impacts have been fully considered within the EA. No significant adverse direct or indirect effects are anticipated.
- 2) The Proposed Action would provide beneficial impacts to recreational and educational opportunities. Effects to the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial, nor do they involve unique or unknown risks.
- 3) The Proposed Action supplements continuing efforts on the project lands to increase quality of wetland, riparian, and upland habitats, providing benefits to native plants and animals. Effects of potential increases in disturbance are minimized to cause no significant adverse effects.
- 4) The Proposed Action would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not result in cumulative significant impacts when considered with other recent, ongoing, or foreseeable future actions.
- 5) No proposed activities would affect prehistoric, historic, or ethnographic sites and activities are to be compatible with maintenance or enhancement of cultural resources.
- 6) The Proposed Action would not have adverse effects on species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act or on designated critical habitat.
- 7) The Proposed Action 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 GSA's environmental regulations at 7 Code of Federal Regulations Part 799 I find the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Barring any new data identified during the public and agency review of the Final EA that would dramatically change the analysis

presented in EA or identification of a significant controversial issue, the EA and FONSI are considered final 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Availability.



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November 16, 2011
Date