DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Jocko River Restoration – Bison Range Reach Project, Flathead Indian Reservation, Sanders County, Montana

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs

ACTION: Notice of Availability

SUMMARY: This notice is to advise interested parties that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), in cooperation with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) have prepared a final Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Jocko Valley Service Area Improvements – Jocko K Canal North of the Jocko River (Project) on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Lake County, Montana. This notice announces that the final EA and FONSI are now available in hard copy and available electronically at the addresses below. The FONSI is a finding on environmental effects, not a decision to proceed, therefore it cannot be appealed.

ADDRESSES: You may request a hard copy of the final EA and FONSI by writing the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Natural Resources Department, PO Box 278, Pablo, Montana, 59855, or emailing taryn.bushey@cskt.org. An electronic copy can be downloaded at https://csktnrd.org/water-management/irrigation-infrastructure.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Tabitha Espinoza Restoration Program Manager Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes Natural Resources Department P.O. Box 278 Pablo, MT 59855 406-675-2700 ext. 7283 Tabitha.espinoza@cskt.org	Taryn Bushey DEWR NEPA Coordinator Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes Natural Resources Department P.O. Box 278 Pablo, MT 59855 406-675-2700 ext. 1255 taryn.bushey@cskt.org

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION: The Jocko River and floodplain habitat in the Project area are degraded due to decades of channel alteration, impacting Bull Trout and other native fish species as well as other wildlife dependent on riparian and floodplain habitats. The purpose this Project is to restore degraded aquatic and floodplain habitat within and adjacent to the Jocko River to support the recovery of threatened Bull Trout and to improve wildlife habitat in the surrounding areas. The Project is a component of CSKT's watershed-scale aquatic restoration efforts in the Jocko River drainage. The aging infrastructure results in high seepage rates, high maintenance costs, and overall inefficiency of the system. The Bison Range Reach is located west of Dixon, MT and the approximate center of the project is at 47.298416°, -114.265129°. The Project will reconnect 14,300 linear feet of new Jocko River channel in an historical channel alignment in the former floodplain, reclaim approximately 1200 feet of existing Jocko River to a matrix of wetland, riparian, and upland habitats, and actively restore the current and former floodplain.

AUTHORITY: This notice is published pursuant to 43 CFR 46.305 of the Department of Interior Regulations (43 CFR 46 et seq.), the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.), and in accordance with the exercise of authority delegated to the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs by 209 DM 8. The decision has been made to go forward with the Preferred Alternative based on the content of the Final EA and issuance of the FONSI.

The FONSI is a finding on environmental effects, not a decision to proceed, therefore it cannot be appealed. 25 CFR 2.7 requires a 30-day appeal period after the decision to proceed with the action is made before the action may be implemented. Appeal information will be made publicly available when the decision to proceed is made. This decision will become final 30 days after posting this notice.

You may appeal this decision directly to the Interior Board of Indian Appeals (IBIA) in accordance with the regulations in the 43 CFR Parts 4.310-4.340 and 25 CFR 2.7. The IBIA is located at the following address: U.S. Department of the Interior, Interior Board of Indian Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 801 N. Quincy Street, Suite 300, Arlington, Virginia, 22203.

Your notice of appeal to the IBIA must be signed by you or your attorney and postmarked within 30 days of the date of this decision. It should clearly identify the decision being appealed. You must send copies of your notice of appeal to the following offices: (1) the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, Mailstop 4140-MIB, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20240: (2) each interested party known to you; and (3) this office. Your notice of appeal sent to the IBIA must certify that you have sent copies to all necessary parties. If you file a notice of appeal, the IBIA will notify you of further appeal procedures. If no appeal is timely filed, this decision will become final for the Department of the Interior at the expiration of the appeal period. No extension of time may be granted for filing the notice of appeal.

Shane R. Hendrickson

Digitally signed by Shane R. Hendrickson
Date: 2024.12.05 08:54:47 -07'00'

Shane Hendrickson
Superintendent – Flathead Agency
Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior

Date