



Notice of Availability and Intent to Adopt the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact in Lieu of a California Environmental Quality Act Environmental Document for the Rock Creek Meadow Restoration Project

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Introduction: In lieu of preparing its own environmental document, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Northern Region, acting as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), intends to use the Environmental Assessment /Finding of No Significant Impact (EA/FONSI), prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office (USFWS) for a project that will restore habitat for the federally and state listed endangered Shasta crayfish (*Pacifastacus fortis*). Under CEQA, state agencies are encouraged to use a FONSI prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rather than preparing a new CEQA environmental document. Use of the NEPA document may occur when the FONSI is (1) prepared before a CEQA environmental document would otherwise be completed for the project; and (2) public review is conducted in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15225(a) states that “where the federal agency circulated the EIS or finding of no significant impact for public review as broadly as state or local law may require and gave notice meeting the standards in Section 15072(a) or 15087(a), the lead agency under CEQA may use the federal document in the place of an EIR or negative declaration without recirculating the federal document for public review. One review and comment period is enough. Prior to using the federal document in this situation, the lead agency shall give notice that it will use the federal document in the place of an EIR or negative declaration and that it believes that the federal document meets the requirement of CEQA.” The Rock Creek Meadow Restoration Project EA prepared by USFWS is available for public review between July 29 and August 31, 2015.

This Notice is provided by the Northern Region of CDFW, lead agency under CEQA. If USFWS issues a FONSI consistent with the conclusions of the EA, CDFW intends to use the EA/FONSI in lieu of preparing its own environmental document for the project. The EA includes a description of the Proposed Action and evaluates the potential for significant environmental impacts. The EA concludes that the Proposed Action will have no significant impacts to the environment. CDFW believes that the EA meets the requirements of CEQA.

Project Description: USFWS and CDFW, in cooperation with the multi-agency Shasta Crayfish Technical Review Committee and Shasta Crayfish Recovery Implementation Team, are proposing to create refuge habitat for Shasta crayfish in an isolated, historically occupied segment of Rock Creek in the Hat Creek Drainage in Shasta County, California. The objective of the proposed Rock Creek Meadow Restoration Project (Project) is to create a refuge habitat for Shasta crayfish where they will be isolated from impacts that are causing their decline. To accomplish this objective the Project would restore a 650-foot reach of Rock Creek to pre-diversion conditions, which will recreate high-quality habitat for

Shasta crayfish, along with reintroduction of Shasta crayfish to the restored reach and an existing isolated pool thereby establishing a refuge population safe from the effects of invasive species. Shasta crayfish would be relocated from a nearby declining population to Rock Creek. To fully restore streamflow, it is proposed to move the hatchery diversion and intake approximately 650 feet downstream of its current location. The stream channel above the new diversion would be restored and Shasta crayfish would be reintroduced to the restored and rewatered channel. These activities are intended to help meet the goals of the USFWS Shasta Crayfish Recovery Plan and avoid extinction of the species.

Project Location: The 6.15-acre Project Area is located along Rock Creek, which is a tributary of Hat Creek approximately seven miles east of the town of Burney in Shasta County, California. Rock Creek is a natural spring-fed drainage approximately 0.9 mile in length.

Project activities will take place on lands owned by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). CDFW leases the property for the Crystal Lake Fish Hatchery from PG&E.

Comment Period: Comments may be provided through **August 31, 2015, at 5:00 pm.**

Document Availability: The EA is available for review at Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Northern Region Office at 601 Locust Street, Redding, CA 96001, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office at 2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-2605, Sacramento, CA 95825, Fall River Valley Library at 43250 Highway 299 E, Fall River Mills, CA 96028, and Burney Library at 37038 Siskiyou Street, Burney, CA 96013. Electronic copies may be requested by contacting the contact person or online at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/news/pubnotice/>

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Project Details and Impacts: The Project has the potential to impact wetlands, riparian and stream vegetation as well as Shasta crayfish, greater sandhill crane, bald eagle, willow flycatcher, migratory birds, Pit sculpin, and Castlegar hawthorne. With the incorporation of impact avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures, Project impacts would be reduced below a level of significance. Implementation of the Project will help meet the goals of the Shasta Crayfish Recovery Plan. The goals of the Recovery Plan would be met by moving an at-risk population of Shasta crayfish, which has been threatened by invasive species and other stressors, to suitable habitat free of those stressors. The Project could very likely be the turning point that prevents the extinction of the Shasta crayfish by providing habitat for up to 1,700 or more individuals.