



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, SACRAMENTO DISTRICT
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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Isabella Lake Dam Safety Modification Project End of Emergency Deviation Kern County, California

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District (Corps), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS), has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. The Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) dated July 2022 for the Isabella Lake Dam Safety Modification Project (DMSP), End of Emergency Deviation, addresses ending the Interim Risk Reduction Measures (IRRM) that were put in place to restrict the reservoir elevation at Isabella Lake, Kern County, California, to 2585.5 feet (Isabella Project Datum [IPD]; 2589.26 feet North American Vertical Datum [NAVD] 88) above mean sea level until the Isabella Lake DSMP is complete. A Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Isabella Lake DSMP was completed in October 2012. This Final SEA is an updated environmental document that tiers to the Draft EIS, Final EIS, and nine subsequent SEAs.

The Final SEA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated the no action alternative and the proposed action alternative.

Under the no action alternative, the Corps would make the IRRM permanent—restricting the gross pool at Isabella Lake to 2585.5 feet IPD (2589.26 feet NAVD 88) above mean sea level during the period from March 20 to September 30—after the Isabella Lake DSMP is complete. This is a deviation of 20 feet below the normal gross pool elevation of 2605.5 feet IPD (2609.26 feet NAVD 88). Occasionally, during severe flood events, lake levels would rise above the restricted pool, but Isabella Lake Operations would release water as quickly and safely as possible to bring lake levels back below the restricted pool elevation.

Under the proposed action alternative, the Corps would end the emergency deviation once the Isabella Lake DSMP is complete and appropriate testing shows that the Isabella Dams can safely hold water up to the gross pool elevation of 2605.5 feet IPD (2609.26 feet NAVD 88). Lake levels would then fluctuate according to precipitation patterns and runoff, as well as reservoir operations in accordance with the Isabella Lake Regulation Manual, dated May 1953, revised January 1978, and other agreements. This proposed action is detailed in Section 2.2 of the Final SEA.

For both alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the proposed action is listed in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

	Less than significant effects	Less than significant effects as a result of mitigation	Resource unaffected by action
Aesthetics and Visual Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Air Quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, Toxic & Radioactive Waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Geology, Soils, and Seismology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Land Use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Noise and Vibration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Traffic and Circulation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Special Status Species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Resources and Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the proposed action.

Public review of the Draft SEA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was completed on June 14, 2022. All comments received during the public review period were responded to in the Final SEA and FONSI.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the Corps determined that the recommended plan would have no additional effects to federally listed species or their designated critical habitat beyond what has been covered under the existing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biological opinions covering long term operations of Isabella Lake and the Isabella DSMP (see Appendix A, B, and C of the Final SEA).

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Corps determined that the proposed action to end the emergency deviation has no potential to cause new effects to historic properties, consistent with the previous finding relative to deviation implementation and 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1).

All applicable environmental laws have been considered and coordination with appropriate agencies and officials has been completed.

Technical and environmental criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental

Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives. Based on this report, the reviews by other Federal, State, and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the recommended plan would not cause significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Date

James J. Handura
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commander and District Engineer