

improvements required to meet the Project purpose and need.

- The Preferred Alternative provides significantly greater habitat improvement. It incorporates all of the design elements of the Basic Reconnection Alternative plus dredging an historic oxbow, creating an alternate channel at the river mouth, and restoring a riparian fringe adjacent to the river channel. This alternative also includes other sucker habitat improvement elements not associated with the Basic Reconnection Alternative.

- The Restoration of Channel Form Alternative includes the greatest amount of sucker habitat improvement of the three restoration alternatives because it incorporates all elements associated with the Preferred Alternative as well as restoring additional habitat along the Williamson River channel. However, these increased benefits do not overcome the adverse impacts to cultural resources, water quality and local navigation when compared to the Preferred Alternative. This alternative also was significantly more expensive than the other two alternatives without providing significantly more sucker habitat and diversity.

The relevant factors and rationale to make this decision were as follows. It was determined that the Restoration of Channel Form Alternative presented permanent adverse impacts to navigation (*i.e.*, limitations to vessel size relative to current conditions) (FEIS page 175; USDA 2005), and excessive risk associated with construction related water quality impacts due to greater earthwork and fill volumes placed into the active river channel (*i.e.* elevated turbidity) (FEIS page 173; USDA 2005). This alternative also presented the greatest potential risk and adverse impacts to cultural resources (*i.e.* increased earthwork poses greater potential for exposing artifacts) (FEIS page 175; USDA 2005). The above differences in impacts are directly related to the in-channel fills associated with narrowing and blocking the river channel under the Restoration of Channel Form Alternative. Adverse impacts associated with the Basic Reconnection Alternative were determined to be only slightly less than the Preferred Alternative (FEIS; pages 173–175; USDA 2005); however, improvements to sucker habitat would be significantly less (FEIS page 173; USDA 2005). Therefore, the Preferred Alternative was identified as the environmentally preferred alternative as it best balances the purpose and need of maximizing improvements to sucker

habitat and minimizing adverse impacts (FEIS pages 173–175; USDA 2005).

III. Mitigation

As described within the FEIS, all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted as part of the action. There are irreversible and unavoidable adverse impacts associated with all of the Alternatives that are identified and discussed in the FEIS (FEIS page 170; USDA 2005). Most of these are due to construction related activities. However, most importantly, long-term project benefits will far outweigh the negative short-term effects of construction.

IV. Monitoring and Enforcement

There are no monitoring and enforcement actions that were not included in the preferred alternative and thus became part of the decision.

Decision Statement

In accordance with the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, I have considered all alternatives in this analysis and public input to this project and have identified Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative) as the alternative to be implemented because it provides the most habitat diversity for endangered suckers while balancing the adverse affects to the natural resources of the area.

Signed by Bob Graham (Responsible Federal Official) in Portland, Oregon on January 23, 2006.

Bob Graham,
Oregon State Conservationist, USDA—
Natural Resources Conservation Service.

References

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2005. Final Environmental Impact Statement, Williamson River Delta Restoration Project. Portland, Oregon. Pp. 187.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2005. Biological Opinion for the Williamson River Delta Restoration Project, Klamath County. Klamath Falls, Oregon. Pp. 51.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Notice of Proposed Changes to the Natural Resources Conservation Service's National Handbook of Conservation Practices

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Department of Agriculture.

ACTION: Notice of availability of proposed changes in the NRCS National Handbook of Conservation Practices for public review and comment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given of the intention of NRCS to issue a series of new or revised conservation practice standards in its National Handbook of Conservation Practices. These standards include: “Cover Crop (Code 340)”, “Nutrient Management (Code 590)”, “Prescribed Forestry (Code 409)”, “Silvopasture Establishment (Code 381)”, and “Spring Development (Code 574)”. NRCS State Conservationists who choose to adopt these practices for use within their states will incorporate them into Section IV of their respective electronic Field Office Technical Guides (eFOTG). These practices may be used in conservation systems that treat highly erodible land or on land determined to be wetland.

DATES: *Effective Dates:* Comments will be received for a 30-day period commencing with this date of publication. This series of new or revised conservation practice standards will be adopted after the close of the 30-day period.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Copies of these standards can be downloaded or printed from the following Web site: <ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NHQ/practice-standards/federal-register/>. Single copies of these standards are also available from NRCS in Washington, DC. Submit individual inquiries in writing to Daniel Meyer, National Agricultural Engineer, Natural Resources Conservation Service, P.O. Box 2890, Room 6139–S, Washington, DC 20013–2890.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 343 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 requires the NRCS to make available for public review and comment proposed revisions to conservation practice standards used to carry out the highly erodible land and wetland provisions of the law. For the next 30 days, the NRCS will receive comments relative to the proposed changes. Following that period, a determination will be made by the NRCS regarding disposition of those comments and a final determination of changes will be made.

Signed in Washington, DC, on January 24, 2006.

Bruce I. Knight,
Chief.

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