Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact
Trinity River Watershed Restoration Project

USDA Forest Service, Shasta-Trinity National Forest
Trinity County, California

1 Introduction

The purpose of the Trinity River Watershed Restoration Project (the Project) is to improve instream and riparian habitat at a watershed-scale and to accelerate the recovery of North Coast salmon populations (coho salmon, steelhead, and Chinook salmon), thereby fulfilling tribal trust responsibilities and obligations to local communities as well as recreational and commercial fishing industries, per the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), the Redding Field Office Northwestern California Integrated Resource Management Plan, and state and federal recovery plan goals. For the Project Environmental Assessment (EA), the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is the lead federal agency and US Forest Service (Forest Service) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are cooperating agencies. The Project EA considered two alternatives: the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action.

My decision is based on a thorough review of the Project EA and supporting documentation. The Forest Service, participating as a cooperating agency, assisted in analyzing environmental effects and provided extensive input on the EA.

I have decided to authorize activities on National Forest System (NFS) lands for four reasons. First, there is a need to restore habitat for North Coast salmon populations within the Trinity River Watershed. Second, the Forest Plan and current law, regulation, and policy direct the Forest Service to maintain, improve, and restore habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive fish. Third, the public was involved in all stages of the Project. Public comments were used to inform the analysis and refine the selected alternative (Proposed Action). Fourth, this Project will not significantly affect the human environment and was therefore adequately documented in the EA.

2 Activities Authorized by This Decision

The proposed Project would take place along the mainstem and tributaries of the Trinity River, which are located both below and above the Lewiston and Trinity dams. Project activities would occur on multiple land ownerships. This decision authorizes activities only on NFS lands. The BLM and TRRP have prepared and signed a Decision Notice and FONSI that authorizes federally funded activities on private and BLM-managed lands.

The Project activity area includes the Trinity Alps Wilderness. The Project is analyzed at the hydrologic unit code 10 (HUC 10) subwatershed scale. See Table 1 below for HUC 10 watersheds included in the Project activity area. Key Watersheds, as described by the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS; Forest Service 1995), within the Project activity area are the North Fork Trinity River, South Fork Trinity River, Canyon Creek, and New River. These Key Watersheds are prioritized for restoration activity implementation to

provide aquatic and riparian habitat essential to the maintenance, recovery, or enhancement of anadromous fish populations. The Project's compliance with the ACS is described in more detail in Appendix C of the EA. It should be noted that though restoration activities are prioritized for Key Watersheds, restoration activities are proposed for all the HUC 10 watersheds within the Project activity area.

Table 1. Watersheds withing the Trinity River Watershed Project Area

Subregion (HUC 4)	Basin (HUC 6)	Subbasin (HUC 8)	Watershed (HUC 10)	Acres in Project Activity Area
Klamath-Northern California Coastal 1801	Northern California Coastal 180102	Trinity California 18010211	Big French Creek-Trinity River[1]	153,325
			Browns Creek	47,110
			Canyon Creek	41,033
			Coffee Creek	74,835
			East Fork Trinity River	74,335
			Horse Linto Creek-Trinity River	0
			New River	149,597
			North Fork Trinity River	97,483
			Stuart Fork	88,264
			Swift Creek-Trinity River	121,055
			Tangle Blue Creek-Trinity River	101,393
			Weaver Creek	142,030
		South Fork Trinity 18010212	Lower South Fork Trinity River[3]	44,229
			Lower Hayfork Creek	142,161
			Upper Hayfork Creek	105,697
			Middle South Fork Trinity River	145,776
			Upper South Fork Trinity River	73,634

The Proposed Action is summarized below and fully described in the EA (see Section 4 and Appendix H of the EA). The Proposed Action includes a suite of instream, riparian corridor, and upslope habitat restoration activities that are designed to maintain, enhance, and restore instream processes to benefit aquatic species, riparian and upslope habitats, and water quality. Activities include instream habitat restoration; upslope habitat restoration; and road maintenance, rehabilitation, and decommissioning activities as listed below. Appendix H also includes activity cards that clearly summarize elements of the Proposed Action.

The EA evaluates the Proposed Action at the subwatershed scale, and provides category-specific design guidelines (EA Appendix B) to ensure that effects of future site-specific proposals are within those described

in the EA. As part of implementation, site-specific analysis and public notification will occur as further described in Appendix A of the EA. Activity category-specific design guidelines are provided in Appendix B to provide guidance and ensure that site-specific restoration projects are designed in a manner that is appropriate and sustainable; minimizes adverse effects to aquatic habitats; and maximizes ecological benefits to further support the recovery of aquatic species, habitat, and an ecologically functioning watershed.

2.1 Instream Habitat Restoration

2.1.1 Restoration and Enhancement of In-Channel Habitat

The "restoration and enhancement of in-channel habitat" activity category typically applies to reaches of the mainstem Trinity River or tributaries where channel diversity is limited, and habitat complexity needs to be restored and/or enhanced. This activity category also applies to areas where side channels, alcoves, and other backwater habitats have been filled or blocked from the main channel, disconnecting them from most if not all flow events.

This category includes, but is not limited to, the following activities: installation of habitat elements such as vegetation, loose large wood with and without rootwads, structured log jam (SLJ) installation using vibratory pile-driving techniques (stabilizing the SLJs with timber piles), in-stream boulders, beaver dam analogues (BDAs), post-assisted log structures (PALS), spawning gravel, and other low-tech process-based restoration (LTPBR) techniques. Also included in this category is channel excavation, grading of floodplains, the addition of weir-like tailwater control structures (constructed of logs and or rock) that do not impede fish passage, riparian vegetation removal (where necessary), construction of gravel and skeletal bars, construction of floodplain surfaces with elevations allowing periodic inundation, removal of riparian berms, bedrock fracturing (where necessary) using blasting techniques, and revegetation of restored floodplain surfaces. This activity category typically involves reconnecting and creating side-channel, alcove, oxbow, pond, off-channel, floodplain, and other habitats, and potentially removing off-channel fill and plugs. New side-channels and alcoves may be constructed in geomorphic settings that will accommodate such features. Excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks, front-end loaders, vibratory pile driver and similar equipment may be used to implement proposed restoration projects.

The following describes habitat features that could be installed as part of multiple activity categories.

*2.1.1.1 **Large Wood***

Large wood is characterized as having a minimum size of 20 centimeters (cm) diameter at breast height (DBH) and 2 meters (m) in length. Though the geomorphic benefits of dispersed wood are often minor, such instream wood often provides shelter from flow allowing sediment to deposit and be exchanged with mobile grains during high flows. Instream wood often also creates scour holes in the river channel that help dissipate the energy of flows, which can benefit aquatic habitat by providing hydraulic diversity for benthic organisms. In addition, wood can increase stream shading, cover for predator avoidance, and floodplain complexity. The hydraulic roughness from instream wood can also increase flow access to floodplains, where salmonids can exploit food resources and grow to larger sizes in shorter timeframes to aid in their survival to adulthood (Sommer et al. 2001).

Techniques for wood placement include dispersing wood throughout the floodplain and construction of engineered instream structures such as SLJs. Large wood would be installed using either anchored or unanchored logs, or both, depending on site conditions and wood availability. Wood-loading methods would include but are not limited to direct felling; whole tree tipping/placement; tree placement by helicopters, grip hoisting, or excavator; and other techniques.

SLJs include an anchoring system, such as rebar pinning, ballast rock, or vertical posts. These structures are designed to redirect flow and change scour and deposition patterns and are patterned after stable natural log jams. They are anchored in place using rebar, rock, or piles (driven into a dewatered area or the streambank, but not in water). SLJs create a hydraulic shadow, which is a low-velocity zone downstream that allows sediment to settle. Scour holes develop adjacent to the engineered log jam. While providing valuable fish and wildlife habitat, they also redirect flow and can stabilize a streambank or downstream gravel bar (USFWS 2025).

2.1.1.2 Small Wood

Small wood placements are defined as those that use wood that is less than 20 cm DBH and/or 4 m or less in length. Small wood placement includes but is not limited to small, whole tree placement, BDAs, PALS, brush/willow baffles, post lines only, post lines with wicker weaves, construction of starter dams, reinforcement of existing active beaver dams, and reinforcement of abandoned beaver dams as described by Pollock et al. (2012). Small wood placement can improve habitat by flattening local stream gradients, increasing floodplain interactions and groundwater storage, capturing of fine sediment in the channel, pool formation, hyporheic exchange, and riparian habitat recovery. Structures consist of porous channel-spanning or partial spanning structures, riparian cuttings (e.g., willow cuttings) and other inert materials that are structurally reinforced with small diameter driven wood posts. Structures include interstitial spaces that allow water, sediment, fish and other aquatic organisms to move through the structure.

2.1.1.3 Boulders

Boulders would be placed in plane-bed streams, streams where boulders had been historically, and other stream conditions where improvements to habitat complexity are warranted. Boulder placements increase instream habitat diversity and complexity, improve flow heterogeneity, provide substrate for aquatic species, and provide flow refugia for fish during elevated flows.

2.1.2 Floodplain Restoration

Floodplain restoration typically applies to areas where floodplains have been disconnected from adjacent streams and rivers. This activity category is aimed primarily at restoring hydraulic connections and inundation across the floodplain to improve the diversity and complexity of aquatic, wetland, meadow, and riparian habitat, as well as ecosystem function within the watershed.

This activity category may include: the setback, breaching, modification, and removal of levees, berms, and dikes as well as floodplain lowering (e.g., mine tailing excavation) or fill in support of hydraulic reconnection across the floodplain (including restoration to stage zero, which creates streams that are fully connected with their floodplains, typically with multi-thread channels). Also included in this activity category, is rock placement (including engineered stream material, riffle ramps, or weirs); filling or reshaping of on- and off-

channel gravel pits; LTPBR techniques such as BDAs and PALS; and other strategies to aggrade the channel and improve connectivity within the floodplain. Levee setback projects include construction of new levees to facilitate removal or breaching of existing levees, and creation of aquatic or riparian habitat. Levees may also be adjusted, or a low levee bench may be created to facilitate floodplain inundation or channel margin habitat. Floodplains should mimic natural or historic flooding patterns and remain flooded/inundated for long enough to activate food webs.

Meadow and floodplain restoration may involve reconnecting down-cut or incising channels to their floodplains to restore hydrologic processes and meadow health; filling incised, entrenched channels; creating new stream channels; regrading floodplains or realigning channels; or installing stabilization structures (e.g., Zeedyk structures). Projects using fill to address channel incision should also incorporate habitat elements that offset the likelihood for incision to re-occur such as adding large wood and channel roughness. These restoration actions may ultimately rely on watershed processes to complete work over time to restore a channel network and floodplain that supports wetland, meadow, and/or grassland habitat. Excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks, front-end loaders, and similar equipment may be used to implement these restoration projects.

Similar to projects that create off-channel/side-channel habitats, proposed floodplain restoration projects could provide details about water supply (channel flow, overland flow, and groundwater), water quality, flow reliability, flooding risk of channel changes, and channel and hydraulic grade.

2.1.3 Removal or Retrofitting of Fish Passage Barriers, Small Dams, Flood Gates, Pilings and Other In-water Structures

The “removal or retrofitting of fish passage barriers, small dams, flood gates, pilings and other in-water structures” activity category typically applies to locations where there are natural or manmade in-stream structures (small dams, fords, diversions, flood gates, pilings, legacy structures, etc.) that are blocking/obstructing hydrologic connectivity, fish passage, and/or habitat function.

This activity category may include: the removal or retrofitting (for fish passage) of small dams, diversions, flood gates, pilings, and legacy structures; separation of streams from artificial impoundments (e.g., ponds or lakes) by realigning and/or rerouting channels around or through these artificial waterbodies and/or through the use of vertical concrete or sheet-pile walls; fish passage enhancement at stream confluences through manual movement of deposited or placed material; and removal or retrofitting (for fish passage) of undersized, deteriorated, or misaligned culverts (culvert replacement is included in the “Road Rehabilitation” activity category) or any other sort of fish passage barrier.

These activities would improve freshwater circulation, flow, and water quality primarily by removing outdated in-stream structures. This activity category is designed to reconnect stream corridors and floodplains; improve fish and wildlife migration; restore more natural channel and flow conditions; restore fisheries access to historical habitat for spawning and rearing; and improve long-term aquatic habitat quality and stream geomorphology. All proposed restoration projects would be designed with seasonal construction considerations to minimize the potential adverse effects to water quality and aquatic species. This project type would include the opportunistic removal and/or management of nonnative fish and other

nonnative species (e.g., bullfrogs) that would take place during dewatering and in-water work area isolation activities utilizing proper removal protocols.

2.1.4 Water Conservation Projects

Water conservation projects may include water conservation and efficiency outreach; the Well Grant Program (designed to mitigate for adverse effects of restoration flows on water supplies of private riverside landowners), Instream Flow Dedication (changes to water rights) associated with Water Code Section 1707, storage and forbearance programs and other similar programs; monitoring to determine low-flow thresholds; designing, permitting, and implementing individualized water conservation systems and associated infrastructure (e.g., fish screens). Instream flow restoration from diversion projects would be designed to reduce water withdrawals especially during low-flow conditions. New systems may include more efficient intake hoses (i.e., better overall functioning not higher flow conveyance) and low volume pumps; the installation of slow flow systems such as trickle fill, solar, and ram pumps, water storage (off-stream storage tanks and ponds and associated off-channel infrastructure) to raise water tables and other techniques to slow runoff; and full-season forbearance systems to eliminate stream withdrawal during lowest flow periods.

Creation, operation, and maintenance of water conservation projects would be designed to reduce low-flow stream diversions and enhance instream flows, particularly base flows that support fish and wildlife habitat during the dry season. Excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks, ditch-digging equipment, front-end loaders, and similar equipment may be used to install new and/or improved water systems.

2.1.5 Salmon Carcass Placement

After spawning, adult salmon die and as salmon carcasses decompose they contribute marine-derived nutrients to the watershed that support many species, including aquatic organisms such as juvenile salmonids. In streams where salmon and steelhead runs have been reduced or eliminated, so too has this component of the nutrient enhancement cycle, which is critical to the health of riverine ecosystems. Therefore, supplementation of these nutrients using salmon carcasses and/or salmon flesh analogs is necessary to support aquatic and riparian food webs.

The salmon carcass placement activity category entails obtaining excess carcasses from the Trinity River Hatchery (TRH) and placing them throughout the Trinity River watershed, where needed. Distribution of carcasses and/or salmon flesh analogs would occur where anadromous fish are known to be present within the watershed or within areas historically accessible to anadromous fish. Carcasses/analogs would be placed randomly within aquatic and riparian areas by placing individual or small groups of carcasses/analogs on the ground, in the water, or wedging them into accumulated wood. Trucks would be used to transport the fish carcasses from the hatchery to the placement sites and hand tools would be used to distribute the carcasses/analogs at the site. This activity would occur when excess carcasses are available as determined by hatchery managers and when technicians are available to perform the carcass placement. If carcasses are not available, salmon flesh analogs would be used. The salmon carcasses utilized in this activity will have been treated through deep-freezing prior to placement and therefore, would not cause salmon poisoning disease.

2.1.6 Remote Site Incubator (RSI) Supplementation

Remote site incubation (RSI) systems have been utilized throughout anadromous streams of the Pacific Coast to incubate, hatch, and stock various salmonid species as a supplementation tool in remote settings. Units consist of a clarifying tank, an incubation tank, a live cart tank, piping between the water intake and the tanks, a head box (at the upstream water intake point), and gravity-fed water. Salmonid eggs are loaded into the unit and after several weeks, fry volitionally leave the RSI system upon hatching.

This technology allows for hatchery-produced fish to be stocked into remote areas, and to be exposed to their natural environment at the earliest possible life stage, thus reducing the potential for hatchery domestication and encouraging more life history strategies to be expressed. Additionally, this technology provides the opportunity for imprinting to occur within the targeted release stream at both the embryonic and presmolt life stage which would increase the likelihood of return by the adult salmon (Dittman and Quinn 1996).

Specific to coho supplementation, the following streams have been prioritized: Grass Valley; Indian; Weaver; Rush; and Deadwood creeks. However, this activity category would include additional streams throughout the Project activity area and would use RSIs to supplement juvenile coho, Chinook, and steelhead. At the time of the preparation of this document, the populations of Chinook and steelhead found within the Trinity River watershed were not ESA-listed. If these populations become ESA-listed, additional ESA coverage for supplementation using these fish would be required.

2.2 Upslope Habitat Restoration

2.2.1 Bioengineered Bank Stabilization

Bioengineered bank stabilization techniques are suitable for many low-order, low-gradient stream segments where streambanks are either actively eroding or at threat of eroding in locations where site conditions do not allow for natural channel meander. Bioengineered bank stabilization techniques may include the following activities individually or as in combination: bank reshaping; slope grading; coir log installation; deformable soil reinforcement (e.g., soil lifts, geogrids) using biodegradable materials; revetment consisting of trees, native plant material installation (herbaceous plants, shrubs, trees), or willow walls; willow siltation baffles; brush mattresses; brush check dams; and brush bundles. Bioengineered project types may also include the placement of large wood in combination with buried riprap, overlain with soil and native plantings and protected by livestock exclusion fencing.

Bioengineered bank stabilization techniques use a minimal amount of hard materials (e.g., rock) and are not intended to include traditional hard engineering techniques. Utilize native materials (logs, cobbles, boulders, etc.) whenever possible, particularly in steeper headwater streams where native materials are readily available. The use of boulders should be limited in scope and quantity, to the minimum necessary to stabilize the slope and protect it from expected stream or overland flows during storms. Boulder structures must be part of a larger restoration design and must include a riparian revegetation element. Guidelines for streambank stabilization techniques are described in Part VII, Project Implementation, of the California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual (CDFW 2010: Vol. I and II) and Part XI, Riparian Habitat Restoration, contains examples of bioengineering techniques.

These activities would reduce input of fine sediment, enhance aquatic and riparian habitat, and improve water quality by integrating vegetation into bank protection measures. To improve aquatic and riparian habitats and reduce soil erosion and sedimentation of streams and wetlands, bioengineered bank stabilization integrates living woody and herbaceous materials with earthwork and recontouring of streambanks. Both organic and inorganic materials are put into place to stabilize and improve the structure of the soil where site constraints limit opportunities for natural channel meander. Bank stabilization measures that use bioengineering techniques minimize many of the impacts on aquatic resources commonly caused by traditional or conventional engineered bank structures. In addition, bioengineered bank stabilization techniques improve aquatic and riparian habitat by increasing stream shade to lower stream temperatures through revegetation, production of invertebrates, future recruitment of large wood into streams, and bank stability.

The proposed bioengineered bank stabilization techniques may require the use of handtools (when possible) and heavy equipment (e.g., self-propelled logging yarders, excavators, backhoes, or dump trucks).

2.2.2 Aquatic, Wetland, Meadow, Riparian, and Upslope Habitat Enhancement

Aquatic, wetland, meadow, riparian, and upslope habitat enhancement may involve removing nonnative terrestrial and aquatic invasive plant species by manual and mechanical methods (i.e., no herbicides); removal of legacy ditches (from prior activities such as mining); removing trees where necessary for watershed restoration (and salvaging for instream placement when appropriate); and revegetating areas with native herbaceous plants (including sedges, rushes, grasses, and forbs), shrubs, and trees. In addition, this activity category includes gathering and installing willow cuttings, stakes, mats, and fences; temporary irrigation; coordination with upstream operators to control dam releases or instream flow levels to provide water during plant establishment; livestock fencing to protect, restore, or establish aquatic or riparian habitat. There are a number of manual and mechanical non-native invasive plant removal methods including prescribed burning, mowing, prescribed grazing, etc. Aquatic, wetland, meadow, riparian, and upslope habitat enhancement may be implemented in correspondence to any of the other restoration activity categories.

Where existing vegetation exceeds riparian needs and is deemed hazardous (i.e., fuel, dead or dying vegetation near road) or adversely impacts desired conditions (such as conifers encroachment on hardwoods or riparian vegetation), selective vegetation removal may occur. Removed vegetation would be retained primarily for aquatic habitat support (i.e., large wood structures), erosion control, and soil amendment (e.g., mulching).

Revegetation with native plants would mimic the area's naturally occurring wetland, meadow, riparian, or aquatic habitats and use seed or plant stock from the local watershed (as available). Revegetation may occur as a stand-alone project and/or part of larger watershed restoration activities to reduce upslope erosion from past land management practices, including timber harvest, mining, road construction, and development. Recurring wildfire also contributes to fine sediment and erosion reaching downslope aquatic habitats. Areas affected by fire would be targeted for revegetation.

Manual and mechanical methods can be used independently or in combination to remove invasive species from aquatic and riparian areas. Sites with a variety of invasive species may receive several different types

of treatments. Herbicides would not be applied as part of these watershed restoration efforts. This project type also includes removal and/or management of nonnative wildlife species (e.g., bullfrogs), as long as the activity is associated with a site-specific restoration project and proper removal protocols are followed.

2.3 Road Decommissioning, Maintenance, and Rehabilitation Activities

The Proposed Action includes upslope actions related to road maintenance, road rehabilitation, and road decommissioning on private and public lands within the Trinity River basin, for the reduction of sediment into the mainstem and tributaries of the Trinity River. In addition, this activity category would address locations along roadways with undersized, deteriorated, misaligned, or otherwise dysfunctional culverts or bridges that warrant replacement. By improving how these roads function, fine sediment supply to the Trinity River basin could decrease over time, improving water quality, fish passage, and instream habitat for salmonids and increasing the production potential of the watershed, which could ultimately benefit a range of ecological functions within the Trinity River Basin.

2.3.1 Road maintenance

Road maintenance activities may include grading; rocking; and clearing, repairing, or adding drainage structures on existing roads to spread out overland flows and minimize erosion and sedimentation improving downslope hydrologic function. Road-cut, fill-slope, fine sedimentation, and stream channel erosion from aging infrastructures and practices have resulted in poorly maintained roads and are contributing to deterioration of aquatic habitats.

2.3.2 Road rehabilitation

Road rehabilitation activities would include out-sloping (shaping the roadway surface to drain toward the fill slope or outside edge of the hillside), roadway rocking, installing rolling dips and critical dips, the addition of water energy dissipaters, the addition of new drainage structures, addressing subsurface water (e.g., underdrains, French drains, French mattresses, permeable fills, etc.), culvert and bridge replacement, and the installation of rock buttresses to stabilize slopes (following slope failures) in an effort to improve drainage and minimize erosion and sedimentation. Constructing or installing a stream crossing, culvert, or bridge may include site excavation, formation, and pouring of a concrete foundation and walls/abutments; installation of metal piles using impact pile driving techniques for permanent and/or temporary bridge structures; installation of the crossing structure; and placement of bioengineered or rock slope protection (RSP) to protect abutments, piers, and walls. New culverts or bridges would be designed to accommodate a 100-year storm.

2.3.3 Road decommissioning

Road decommissioning activities would entail removing stream-crossing structures, culverts, fords, and other types of stream crossings (e.g., “Humboldt crossings”). Depending on slope, soil type, and other factors, these activities could also include reshaping, ripping (the mechanical process to decompact soils), removing berms, seeding, and mulching the decommissioned road surface. If the decommissioned road surface is sloped at all, outsloping would need to occur to the extent feasible so that it self-drains. If the decommissioned road surface drains onto unstable highly erodible slopes, it is appropriate to leave a berm in this area to prevent further erosion of soils.

2.4 Site-Specific Project Development and Design

The Proposed Action would include the application of environmental commitments including a combination of general protection measures (GPMs), design guidelines, and conservation measures (CMs) to site-specific project designs. These environmental commitments were developed based on existing programmatic ESA Section 7 consultations, programmatic CEQA coverage, and other guidance documents and regulatory requirements as discussed further in Appendix B of the EA. These environmental commitments were primarily developed based on measures required by the following ESA consultations:

- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) 2020 Biological Opinion (BiOp) for the Trinity River Restoration Program's Mechanical Channel Rehabilitation, Sediment Management, Watershed Restoration, and Monitoring Actions in Trinity County, California (2020 TRRP BiOp, WCRO-2019-03827)
- USFWS 2025 Programmatic BiOp for the California Statewide Programmatic Restoration Effort (2025 USFWS Statewide Restoration BiOp, FWS Reference: 2022-0005149-S7).

Each site-specific restoration project would be evaluated by an interdisciplinary team led by the federal agencies, to ensure all environmental commitments necessary to avoid significant impacts would be fully incorporated into the site-specific project designs. During site-specific project planning process, cultural review compliant with applicable laws (e.g., Section 106, Executive Order 13007, etc.) would be required. The implementation plan in Appendix A of the EA describes the process that site-specific projects would go through to ensure that each project fits into the Proposed Action described in the EA, incorporates applicable environmental commitments into restoration designs, and enables the lead federal agency to make a streamlined NEPA decision.

2.5 Limits on Project Activities and Location

The Project complies with the Endangered Species Act through use of the 2020 Biological Opinion issued to the Trinity River Restoration Program (2020 TRRP BiOp). The 2020 TRRP BiOp limits instream watershed restoration projects covered by the BiOp annually to:

- 2 fish passage/dam removal projects;
- 8 channel/floodplain rehabilitation projects (4 mainstem and 4 tributary);
- 2 in-stream habitat enhancement projects;
- 3 streambank stabilization projects; and
- 4 road-related projects with in-water activities (i.e. road decommissioning with culvert removal).

TRRP is in the process of reinitiating consultation with NMFS to include all project activity categories described in the Proposed Action that were not previously analyzed in the 2020 TRRP BiOp. Project limitations will also be reviewed during the reinitiated consultation and are anticipated to change. This environmental analysis considered the current limits on Project activities, as well as the expectation that these limits may change. The latest applicable BiOp should be referenced, to determine current Project limits during site-specific project implementation.

Project limits would provide spatial and temporal flexibility during site-specific restoration project development and watershed planning efforts. Implementors within the watershed would continue to collaborate with the assistance of TRRP, Forest Service, and BLM to ensure significant regional effects would not occur.

2.6 Typical Construction Activities and Methods

All activities would incorporate the applicable environmental commitments outlined in Appendix B of the EA. The construction activities would be specific to each type of restoration activity, the location of the activity, and numerous other variables related to the unique characteristics of a site-specific project. The magnitude and characteristics of construction activities would vary, but construction activities for restoration projects would share many common features. Section 4.2.5 of the EA outlies the general construction activities that can be anticipated to take place during implementation of the site-specific projects.

2.7 Future Site-Specific Projects

There are a number of site-specific projects proposed that would seek NEPA coverage under this EA. Appendix A of the EA outlines the implementation process for proposed site-specific projects. When site-specific actions are proposed, the interdisciplinary team will analyze the action to ensure that the effects would be within those described in the EA. As part of the implementation process, we will share this information with the public and notify any nearby landowners prior to taking actions. Table 2 below provides a preliminary list of these watershed restoration projects identified by Reclamation, Forest Service, and BLM. The Forest Service will be lead agency for projects only that occur on NSF lands.

In addition to the site-specific projects listed below, there are more than 80 culvert repair and replacement site-specific projects that are proposed by the Forest Service and partners to address sedimentation issues across the Project area.

Table 2. Potential future projects within the Trinity River subbasin.

Activity Category	HUC 10 Watershed[1]	Lead Federal Agency	Project Name/Subtype
Instream Habitat Restoration	Big French Creek-Trinity River	TRRP	Evans Bar Channel Rehabilitation
		TRRP	Sky Ranch Channel Rehabilitation
		Forest Service	Big Ranch BDAs
			Dutch Creek Large Wood Placement
			Manzanita Creek Barrier (Dam) Removal – Fish Passage Improvement
	Lower Hayfork Creek	TRRP	Salt Creek Floodplain Restoration
			Hayfork Creek BDAs

Activity Category	HUC 10 Watershed[1]	Lead Federal Agency	Project Name/Subtype
		Forest Service	SF Headwaters BDAs
			Hayfork Creek Stage Zero
			Upper Tule Creek Culvert Replacement – Fish Passage Improvement
			West Tule Creek Culvert Replacement – Fish Passage Improvement
			Olsen Creek Culvert Replacement – Fish Passage Improvement
			Upper Corral Creek Culvert Replacement – Fish Passage Improvement
	Upper Hayfork Creek	Forest Service	Hayfork Creek BDAs
			SF Headwaters BDAs
			Hayfork Creek Stage Zero
			Upper Big Creek Culvert Replacement – Fish Passage Improvement
			Lower Big Creek Culvert Replacement – Fish Passage Improvement
	Lower South Fork Trinity River	Forest Service	SF Headwaters BDAs
			Big Ranch BDAs
			Hyampom Creek Culvert Replacement – Fish Passage Improvement
	Middle South Fork Trinity River	Forest Service	SF Headwaters BDAs
			Silver Creek Culvert Replacement – Fish Passage Improvement
	Upper South Fork Trinity River	Forest Service	SF Headwaters BDAs
			White Rock Guard Station BDAs
	East Fork Trinity River	Forest Service	Upper Trinity BDAs
	Swift Creek-Trinity River	Forest Service	Upper Trinity BDAs
	Tangle Blue Creek – Trinity River	Forest Service	Upper Trinity BDAs

Activity Category	HUC 10 Watershed[1]	Lead Federal Agency	Project Name/Subtype
	Browns Creek	Forest Service	SF Headwaters BDAs
	Canyon Creek	Forest Service	Canyon Creek Large Wood Placement
	Coffee Creek	Forest Service	Upper Trinity BDAs
	Weaver Creek – Trinity River	TRRP	Indian Creek Fish Passage Barrier Removal
			Little Browns Creek – Remote Site Incubation
			East Weaver Creek – Remote Site Incubation
			Grass Valley Creek – Remote Site Incubation
			Indian Creek – Remote Site Incubation
			Deadwood Creek – Remote Site Incubation
			Rush Creek – Remote Site Incubation
			Canyon Creek – Remote Site Incubation
			Clear Gulch – Remote Site Incubation
			Carcass Supplementation
			Deadwood Creek BDAs
		Forest Service	Weaver Basin BDAs
			Little Browns Creek BDAs
			Rush Creek BDAs
			Little Browns Creek Large Wood Placement
			Rush Creek Large Wood Placement
			Deadwood Creek Large Wood Placement
			West Weaver Creek Stage Zero
			Sydney Gulch Restoration
			Deadwood Creek Gravel Augmentation
			West Weaver Creek Diversion Upgrades – Weaverville CSD
			Yurok RSI Project

Activity Category	HUC 10 Watershed[1]	Lead Federal Agency	Project Name/Subtype
		BLM	Panwauket Gulch
Upslope Habitat Restoration	Big French Creek – Trinity River	Forest Service	Junction City Noxious Weed Removal
	Lower South Fork Trinity River	Forest Service	Hamptom Reach of SF Trinity Riverbank Stabilization
	North Fork Trinity River	Forest Service	Grizzly Creek Slide Remediation (Trinity Alps Wilderness)
	Weaver Creek	TRRP	Deadwood Carr Fire Sediment Reduction Phase II
		Forest Service	Weaver Basin Noxious Weed Removal
Road Maintenance, Rehabilitation, and Decommissioning Activities	Big French Creek – Trinity River	Forest Service	Sailor Bar – Trinity River Access Improvement
			Private Lands Acquisition and Dutch Creek Road Decommissioning
	Weaver Creek – Trinity River	Forest Service	East Weaver Creek Sediment Source Reduction
			Private Lands Acquisition and Dutch Creek Road Decommissioning

[1]Some site-specific projects would occur in more than one HUC 10 watershed.

3 Decision Rationale: Ecological Need for Project

There is a need to restore habitat for Chinook and coho salmon and improve habitat function and quality within the Trinity River Watershed. The southern Oregon/Northern California coasts (SONCC) coho is a population of coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) that is listed as a threatened evolutionarily significant unit under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Upper Klamath-Trinity Chinook is a population of Chinook that is listed as a sensitive ESU by the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region. Both of these species are native to the Trinity River and are culturally and economically important to the people of northern California. Not long ago, the Trinity River watershed provided conditions that supported robust and resilient populations of coho salmon that could persist under dynamic environmental conditions. The combined effects of hydropower operations, fish harvest, hatcheries, and habitat alterations have led to declines in these populations.

SONCC coho and Upper Klamath-Trinity Chinook are anadromous fish. Beginning their lives as eggs buried in gravel redds[1] in freshwater rivers and streams, the alevins that hatch from these eggs remain underground until their yolk sac is consumed. When they emerge as fry, they must feed almost

[1] Redds are hollows in sand or gravel on a river bed, scooped out as a spawning place by anadromous fish.

immediately. They continue to feed in their freshwater habitat until they reach the smolt stage and head to the ocean. After normally living 1 year in freshwater, then 2 years in the ocean, they return to their natal river to spawn and die (Moyle 2002).

In 1964, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) completed the Trinity River Division of the Central Valley Project. The TRD involved the construction of several dams and the diversion of up to 90 percent of the Trinity River flow. The dams blocked the passage of salmonids and lamprey to habitat upstream of Lewiston Dam and restricted anadromous fish to habitat downstream. The dams eliminated the transport of wood and coarse sediment from over 700 square miles of the upper watershed. Below the dams, river water originates from the lower, colder portion of the reservoir, resulting in lower temperatures than those experienced before the reservoirs were filled.

The purpose of this Proposed Action is to improve instream and riparian habitat to accelerate the recovery of north coast salmonid populations (coho salmon, steelhead, and Chinook salmon) and other special status aquatic species, thereby fulfilling tribal trust responsibilities and obligations to local communities as well as recreational and commercial fishing industries (per the STNF LRMP, BLM's NCIP, and state and federal recovery plan goals [NMFS 2014, CDFG 2004]).

The Proposed Action would address these ecological issues in the following ways:

- Restore and improve instream conditions sufficient to support all life stages of salmonids and other aquatic species;
- Restore upstream and downstream fish passage for all life stages of salmonids;
- Restore continuous paths for wood dispersal, nutrient cycling, sediment transport, and movement of other vegetative material essential for productive aquatic habitat;
- Maintain or restore native plant communities and vegetative structure impacted by invasive plants and pathogens, while rehabilitating eroding streambanks to improve water quality, shade conditions, and large wood recruitment;
- Repair, replace, or remove ineffective instream structures;
- Restore and improve riparian and meadow habitat to promote healthy conditions for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife populations;
- Improve late summer/fall base flow conditions through process-based restoration, water conservation improvements, and meadow restoration;
- Increase nutrient inputs through salmon carcass placement in the watershed; and
- Stabilize upslope areas around road infrastructure to minimize erosion and sediment discharges within the watershed to bring the sediment impaired watersheds into compliance with sediment reduction total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for the South Fork Trinity and Trinity Mainstem rivers (EPA 1998 & EPA 2001).

The Proposed Action would continue our ongoing restoration efforts and streamline future site-specific environmental reviews, which would likely increase the number of restoration activities implemented on an annual basis.

The No Action Alternative would not improve habitat for salmonids, and it would not facilitate the creation of fish habitat in the future. It would not provide additional spawning habitat for larger fish. Finally, the No Action Alternative would not improve instream and riparian habitat to accelerate the recovery of north coast salmonid populations (coho salmon, steelhead, and Chinook salmon) and other special status aquatic species.

In short, the Proposed Action contains a set of activities that are the most beneficial to north coast salmonids, while minimizing potential impacts to them and other resources. By authorizing those portions of the Proposed Action that occur on NFS lands, our Forest is partnering to improve habitat for these important threatened fish.

4 Decision Rationale: Forest Service Direction

The Forest Plan and current law, regulation, and policy direct the Forest Service to maintain, improve, and restore habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive fish; as reflected in the Aquatic Conservation Strategy. This Project is consistent with that direction as well as other laws, regulations, and policies.

4.1 National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) directs the Forest Service to prepare Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) for each planning area. Forest Plans are required to "contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern within the plan area" (36 CFR 219.9(b)(1)). The NFMA further provides that all projects proposed on a National Forest must be consistent with the applicable Forest Plan (36 CFR 219.2(b)).

The current forest plan for the Shasta-Trinity National Forest was approved in 1995 (USDA 1995). The Forest Plan was informed by the Northwest Forest Plan (USDA, USDI 1994), a multi-jurisdictional planning effort that was designed to address important ecological threats on NFS and BLM-managed lands from northern California to the Canadian border. An important element of the Northwest Forest Plan is the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) was completely incorporated into the Shasta-Trinity Forest Plan. The ACS sets standards and goals regarding the management of Riparian Reserves[2] by establishing nine ACS objectives. On the one hand, a project that retards or prevents the attainment of the ACS objectives is prohibited or regulated (p. 4-54). On the other hand, the ACS objectives provide direction regarding types of projects that should be implemented.

Each ACS objective provides that projects should *maintain* or *restore* various ecological attributes that make up healthy watersheds and healthy native fish populations. As discussed in Appendix C of the Project EA, the Proposed Action would, at a minimum, *maintain* the relevant ecological attributes protected by the

[2] Riparian Reserves are designated areas along streams and unstable areas where special management practices are implemented to protect water quality, fish habitat, and other riparian-dependent resources. The Trinity River and its 100-year floodplain falls within a Riparian Reserve.

nine ACS objectives. However, the Proposed Action would also *restore* those attributes mentioned in six of the nine ACS Objectives, as listed in Table 3 below.

While the No Action Alternative would *maintain* all of the ecological attributes protected by the ACS objectives, the No Action Alternative would not *restore* any of those attributes.

In addition to the ACS, which applies across multiple organizational units, the Forest Plan for the Shasta-Trinity National Forest recognizes that the need for improving and sustaining anadromous fish populations is a local need. The Forest Plan states: "The Sacramento and Trinity River Basins once sustained several of the largest populations of important anadromous fish (salmon and steelhead) in California. However, factors such as dam construction, catastrophic floods, natural landslides, over harvest of fish, human activities on the landscape, and domestic livestock grazing have contributed to reduced habitat quality and population levels" (USDA 1995, p. 3-9). As a result, the Forest Plan directs us to "provide for the protection, maintenance, and improvement of wild trout and salmon habitat" (USDA 1995, p. 4-4). The Forest Plan also identifies site-specific goals for each of 22 management areas across the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The Project is located within the Trinity River Management Area (Management Area 15). One of the stated goals for Management Area 15 is to "emphasize anadromous fisheries habitat management" (USDA 1995, p. 4-143).

While the No Action Alternative would maintain the current habitat for salmon, it would not improve or restore it. The No Action Alternative would not allow us to manage and improve anadromous fish habitat as part of this Project. By authorizing those portions of the Proposed Action that occur on NFS lands, this decision helps fulfill the Forest's objective to improve fish habitat to maintain viable populations of native species.

Table 3. Elements of the ACS Objectives that would Be Restored under the Proposed Action

ACS Objective	The Proposed Action will restore:
1	…the distribution, diversity, and complexity of watershed and landscape-scale features to ensure the protection of the aquatic systems to which species, populations, and communities are uniquely adapted.
3	…the physical integrity of the aquatic system, including shorelines, banks and bottom configurations.
5	…the sediment regime under which aquatic ecosystems evolved. Elements of the sediment regime include the timing, volume, rate, and character of sediment input, storage, and transport.
7	…the timing, variability, and duration of floodplain inundation and water table elevation in meadows and wetlands.
8	…the species composition and structural diversity of plant communities in riparian areas and wetlands to provide adequate summer and winter thermal regulation, nutrient filtering, appropriate rates of surface erosion, bank erosion, and channel migration and to supply amounts and distributions of coarse woody debris sufficient to sustain physical complexity and stability.
9	…habitat to support well-distributed populations of native plant, invertebrate, and vertebrate riparian-dependent species.

4.2 Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) directs that “the Secretary of Agriculture with respect to the National Forest System shall establish and implement a program to conserve fish, wildlife, and plants, including those which are listed as endangered species or threatened species pursuant to Section 4 of this Act." 16 U.S.C. § 1534(a). The Forest Plan directs us to “Maintain and/or enhance habitat for [threatened, endangered and sensitive species] consistent with individual species recovery plans” (USDA 1995, p. 4- 30).

The SONCC Coho Salmon Recovery Plan (NMFS 2014) provides a roadmap guiding implementation of restoration based on the best available science; targeting identified threats and stresses to coho. Coho salmon critical habitat (CCH) for SONCC coho salmon was designated by NMFS, on May 5, 1999. Coho salmon critical habitat is defined in §3(5)(A) of the ESA as “the specific areas within the geographical area occupied by the species ... on which are found those physical or biological features (I) essential to the conservation of the species and (II) which may require special management considerations or protection.” Critical habitat was designated to include the water, substrate, and adjacent riparian zones of estuarine and riverine reaches (including off-channel habitats); not limited to, spawning sites, food resources, water quality and quantity, water temperature, water velocity, cover/shelter, food, riparian vegetation, space, and safe passage conditions (64 FR 24049, May 5, 1999).

The No Action Alternative would not implement any recovery actions to conserve the threatened SONCC coho.

By authorizing those portions of the Proposed Action that occur on NFS lands, this decision meets the Endangered Species Act's intent by enhancing habitat for a threatened species in a manner consistent with its recovery plan.

4.3 Clean Water Act

Section 404 of the CWA (33 U.S.C. 1344) regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into WOTUS, including wetlands. Under the Section 404 program, a permit is required before dredge or fill material is discharged into WOTUS, unless the activity is exempt from Section 404 regulation. Under provisions of the CWA, the United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) administers the day-to-day Section 404 program, which includes general and individual permit decisions, jurisdictional determinations, developing policy and guidance, and enforcing the provisions of Section 404. WOTUS are defined in 33 CFR 328.3, which has been clarified following multiple Supreme Court decisions and supplemental guidance documents issued by USACE and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the agency that is responsible for developing and interpreting policy, guidance, and environmental criteria for the Section 404 program. The need for a Section 404 permit would be determined during the site-specific project planning prior to commencing in-stream channel alterations and would be the responsibility of the project proponent.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 (33 U.S.C. 1341) requires that applicants obtain a Section 401 water quality certification for activities that result in a discharge into waters of the United States (WOTUS). Such certifications are typically issued by a certifying authority, usually a state or tribe, that can attest that the discharge complies with applicable provisions of the CWA. In California, water quality certifications are issued by one of nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Boards) that collectively with the State Water Resources Control Board, have the authority to regulate discharges under CWA Section 401

and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne). Under California's Porter-Cologne Act discharges to waters of the state require filing a report of waste discharge (WDR). In certain cases, a Regional Board may issue a combined 401 certification/wavier of WDRs application. The applicability of existing 401 certifications and/or WDR Waiver will be evaluated based on project-specific requirements and pursuant to current state and federal regulatory requirements.

By authorizing those portions of the Proposed Action that occur on NFS lands, this decision helps to restore the biological integrity of our Nation's waters. Impacts on water quality will be temporary and will provide a net benefit. The No Action Alternative would create no short-term impacts to water, but it would forego this opportunity to meet the Clean Water Act's intent.

5 Public and Agency Involvement

The public was involved in all stages of this Project. Public comments were used to inform the analysis and refine the selected alternative (the Proposed Action). The summary of public scoping and participation is included in Appendix G of the EA.

5.1 Opportunities for Comment

The TRRP and cooperating agencies including Forest Service and BLM, have held numerous public meetings over the past 25 years, to provide the public with information on TRRP's rehabilitation activities and obtain public input. Notice of all public meetings is provided in local newspapers and posted on the TRRP's website: http://www.trrp.net. As part of ongoing TRRP outreach activities, TRRP staff members have met with local groups and individual landowners from the Junction City area to address general concerns related to the entire river restoration program. That input was used when developing the Proposed Action.

The NEPA laws and regulations that apply to Forest Service activities stress the importance of public involvement. Scoping is "an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action." (40 CFR 1501.7). Scoping invites state, federal, and local agencies and the interested public to review and provide comments on the proposed federal actions. While the Council on Environmental Quality requires scoping only for actions being analyzed as part of an Environmental Impact Statement, current Forest Service regulations require scoping of all projects, including the Project.

On November 4, 2022, the TRRP, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and BLM's Redding Field Office released a public scoping announcement to request input from the public on the proposed watershed restoration project. The public scoping period was open from November 4 to December 5, 2022, and the public was invited to provide comments by mail or email to TRRP staff.

At the onset of the public scoping period, notices informing the public of the intent to begin the environmental review process were posted on the TRRP, Reclamation, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and BLM websites and at the TRRP Weaverville office, BLM Redding Field Office, and Weaverville Ranger District Office. Scoping notices were also mailed and emailed to local landowners and interest groups and published in the Trinity Journal on November 16, 2022. The TRRP, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and BLM provided the scoping flyer on their respective websites to outline the proposed watershed restoration project and to receive public input. The scoping flyer is provided below.

The TRRP, BLM, and Shasta-Trinity National Forest hosted a virtual and in-person scoping meeting on November 17, 2022, to outline the Project, receive public input, and to answer questions. During the meeting, the public asked questions and provided input. Presentation slides and a recording of the November 17, 2022, scoping meeting are available on TRRP's website. The scoping notice and agenda were provided to the public either on the agencies' websites or at the November 17, 2022, public meeting.

In May 2023, the TRRP engaged restoration practitioner stakeholders to provide initial feedback on the Project scope, activities and process. The meeting was followed up with a survey to give the opportunity for these stakeholders to provide specific recommendations and concerns.

An in-person open house for the public to be informed and provide comment on the Public Draft EA took place on March 1, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time at the Weaverville Hotel in Weaverville, California. Information about the Draft EA and the public meeting is available on the TRRP's website (see https://www.trrp.net/restoration/watershed-activities/watershed-ea/) Trinity River Watershed Restoration Project page.

5.2 Public Comments on the Draft EA

Consistent with Reclamation and BLM agency guidance, public review of the Draft EA began when the agencies posted the document to their websites on March 28, 2025. The Forest Service public review period began when notice was published in Redding Record Searchlight, which is the paper of record, on April 1, 2025. The document was circulated to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested organizations and individuals for a 30-day comment period. Public review of the Draft EA ended on May 1, 2025.

No new issues were raised due to these comments. The comments did not identify new or different ways of conducting the environmental analysis. The coded comment letters from the 30-day comment period and associated responses were included as Appendix G of the EA.

5.3 Conclusion Related to Public Involvement

Based on my review of the Project EA and Appendices, it is clear to me that the Proposed Action responds to feedback from the public, and meets the need to improve habitat for salmonids within the Trinity River Basin. All substantive issues that were raised by the public have been adequately addressed in the Environmental Consequences section of the EA.

6 Finding of No Significant Impact

The purpose of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is to briefly present the reasons why the Forest Service has determined that an action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an environmental impact statement therefore will not be prepared.

As the responsible official, I am responsible for evaluating the effects of the Project relative to the definition of significance. I have reviewed and considered the EA and Project record documentation, and I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. My rationale for this finding is as follows.

6.1 Context

As described previously, the Project is responsive to the need for improvement of the anadromous fish habitat, and at-risk fish populations, in the Trinity River Basin. The Project EA analyzes the effects of the Proposed Action at the subwatershed scale. Similarly, the following section considers the watershed impacts of the Proposed Action through the lens of 10 intensity factors (36 CFR 220.7)

6.2 Intensity

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the Project decision relative to each of the 10 intensity factors.

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the federal agency believes that on balance, the effect will be beneficial.

There would be no significant effects, beneficial or adverse, resulting from the incremental implementation of this Project. The EA describes both potential short term negative effects, as well as immediate and longer term beneficial effects. As summarized in the EA, any adverse effects of my decision would be small in scale and short term. They do not reach the level of significance. The Project is expected to provide localized improvements in aquatic and riparian habitats currently present, and would result in some level of cumulative improvement to the watershed. The Proposed Action would help meet long-term needs to enhance fish habitat and provide properly functioning river conditions. Viewed within the context of the Trinity River and Watershed, the Project would not result in any significant impacts.

2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health and safety.

Due to the limited duration of the Proposed Action and implementation of public safeguards, public safety would not be at risk. Standard Reclamation and Forest Service practices for notifying the public of heavy equipment activities would be implemented during construction activities. Appendix B of the EA outlines environmental commitments that will be incorporated into site specific activities to ensure that Project activities avoid or adequately minimize effects to public health and safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

Although there would be no significant adverse effects in these areas, the Proposed Action would result in a minor disturbance to river attributes while enhancing the outstandingly remarkable value (ORV)—the anadromous fishery—for which the river was designated as a Wild and Scenic River (WSRA; Public Law 90-542 1968), and which is analyzed in Appendix F of the EA. This designation serves to preserve the river's free-flowing condition, water quality (e.g., extremely low turbidity levels under low-flow conditions), and ORVs. Appendix F provides a comprehensive analysis of this alternative consistent with the requirements of the Section 7 of the WSRA, and the BLM has signed their W&S determination. Compliance with the Forest Service managed WSRA and Wilderness areas will be completed during implementation planning and on a site-specific basis, as outlined in Appendix A of the EA. Appendix B of the EA outlines environmental commitments that will be incorporated into site specific activities for avoiding and minimizing effects to

historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

A federal action is controversial if a substantial dispute exists as to its size, nature, or effect; there is no such controversy for the Proposed Action.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. The effects of the Proposed Action have been evaluated in the EA. Similar activities have been completed at past channel rehabilitation sites along the Trinity River and within the watershed, and data collected from these sites showed that no unique or unknown impacts to the human environment have resulted.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action does not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the TRRP. The TRRP and its partners have been implementing watershed and mainstem channel restoration under the Trinity River Flow Evaluation Report and, subsequently, the Trinity River Mainstem Fishery Restoration Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (2000 FEIS/EIR) and the Channel Rehabilitation and Sediment Management Activities for Remaining Phase 1 and Phase 2 Sites, Part 1: Final Master Environmental Impact Report and Part 2: Environmental Assessment/Final Environmental Impact Report (2009 Master EIR), on a programmatic basis; and have completed numerous channel rehabilitation projects on the Trinity River below Lewiston Dam. The Project provides additional analysis at the subwatershed scale for restoration projects, and provides detailed resource impact analysis that will be used to implement site specific activity planning and implementation. Site-specific activities will be authorized by the Forest Service after review outlined in Appendix A of the EA and compliance with all applicable laws and regulations outlined in Appendix D of the EA.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

There would be no significant cumulative effects from the Proposed Action and effects of other channel rehabilitation projects implemented or planned on the Trinity River below Lewiston Dam. Regional effects are analyzed in Chapter 6 of the EA. While some short-term negative effects may result from the Project site-specific activities, these effects have been analyzed in the EA and would not lead to significant effects. Potentially significant long-term project effects from implementing multiple watershed restoration activities are considered and analyzed in the EA. When considered in the context of cumulative watershed effects, the Proposed Action is intended to improve the natural alluvial processes and function of the mainstem Trinity River and its tributaries and watershed. Short-term impacts such as soil disturbance and

turbidity would occur in response to the Project activities, but not to the extent that would cause significant impacts to water quality.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

Federal agencies are required to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties in compliance with 36 CFR Part 800, commonly referred to as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, found at Title 54 USC § 306108. The Section 106 process is often used to satisfy the requirements for cultural resources under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and includes identification, consultations, and, if needed, mitigation measures for determining adverse effects. It requires that federal agencies consider the effects of an undertaking on historic properties, which are defined as cultural resources (including prehistoric, historic, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources) listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

A cultural resource is a broad term that includes prehistoric, historic, architectural, and traditional cultural properties. Cultural resources that meet criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) (defined at 14 CCR Section 15064.5[a]) are called “historical resources,” and cultural resources that meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) (as defined by 36 CFR Section 60.4) are called “historic properties.” While the CRHR and NRHP significance criteria are similar, the NRHP is given precedence in this analysis because many cultural resources eligible for the NRHP are also eligible for inclusion in the CRHR, but the reverse is not necessarily true (California PRC Section 5024.1[c]).

Cultural resources found not eligible for the NRHP must still be considered in planning and NEPA actions following other laws, regulations and EOs, including: the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Historic Sites Act of 1935, Antiquities Act, American Indian Religious Freedom Act, EO 13007 (Indian Sacred Sites), EO 13175 (consultation and coordination with Indian tribal governments), and EO 13287 (Preserve America).

All Project site-specific activities will be required to comply with Section 106, as outlined in Appendix A of the EA. To complete the Section 106 review for each site-specific project, the following process would be followed:

- The project proponent would provide a project description detailing all project activities particularly related to any areas of ground disturbance, staging, and/or access routes.
- The project proponent would work with the lead federal agency for NHPA to develop an area of potential effects (APE).
- The archaeologists at the lead federal agency would initiate the Section 106 review process and any other cultural resources related regulations relevant to the lead agency, including Tribal Consultation.
- The project proponent would conduct a cultural resource survey of the APE and provide a report to the lead federal agency or work directly with the lead federal agency to conduct a cultural resource survey and develop a report. In addition to ground surveys, a records review would be performed to determine past archaeological studies within the APE.

- On NFS lands, the Forest Service would analyze the site-specific project effects to cultural resources and prepare documentation of the findings to complete the Section 106 review. This may include consulting the SHPO. Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to limit project effects would be identified during this process as well.
- If cultural mitigation is required as part of consultation, the project proponent would work with the Forest Service to identify potential options. Possible mitigation measures may include modification of site-specific project design or avoidance of cultural areas.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The Project enrolled in NMFS' August 2020 Trinity River Restoration Program Biological Opinion (2020 TRRP BiOp; NMFS 2020), for ESA coverage. The potential adverse effects to ESA-listed salmonids would be temporary and are described fully in the 2020 TRRP BiOp. Potential effects will be minimized by specific implementation strategies and conservation measures that would be employed during watershed restoration projects (see Environmental Commitments, EA Appendix B).

Although adverse effects to ESA-listed terrestrial wildlife are not expected given project design and environmental commitments, this Project uses USFWS' 2022 (updated in 2025) programmatic BiOp that covers ESA-listed species (under the jurisdiction of USFWS) for watershed restoration activities in California. Watershed restoration activities included in this Statewide Restoration BiOp include instream habitat restoration, native riparian and wetland restoration, and fish passage improvements. The Project activities analyzed in the Project EA that fall under these categories and use the USFWS Statewide Restoration BiOp for ESA coverage would conform to the BiOp. General protection measures (GPMs), design guidelines, and conservation measures (CMs) described in the 2025 USFWS Statewide Restoration BiOp would be employed as part of the environmental commitments for all site-specific projects.

Project activities that do not have coverage under one for these biological opinions will require additional review and consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and/or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Proposed Action also meets the 2011 Revised Recovery Plan for northern spotted owl (NSO) and the Recovery Plan for the marbled murrelet (MAMU) in Washington, Oregon, and California (USFWS 2011; USFWS 1997) by ensuring the Proposed Action implements design features to maintain habitat components for ESA-listed terrestrial species. Based on the EA analysis and supporting documentation, I have determined that the Proposed Action would not have a significant effect on endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not threaten a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed to protect the environment. Implementation of the Proposed Action meets requirements under the Clean Water Act, the Federal Land Protection and Management Act (FLPMA), NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and the Forest Plan for the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

The following permits will be obtained for site-specific activities to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws.

- Section 404, Clean Water Act, Nationwide Permit 27 (San Francisco District, Army Corps of Engineers);
- Section 401, Clean Water Act Water Quality Certification (Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region);
- Encroachment Permits (Trinity County or California Department of Transportation).

6.3 Determination

Based on my finding of No Significant Impact, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for this Project. As a result, I find that the current level of environmental analysis and documentation is sufficient and that no additional analysis or documentation of the environmental effects of the Trinity River Watershed Restoration Project is required.

7 Administrative Review Opportunities

This decision was subject to pre-decisional administrative review according to the objection process set forth by 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. The objection filing period ended on July 4, 2025. No objections were received.

On July 3, 2025, the USDA released new regulations for NEPA at 7 CFR 1b. The department has provided agencies with discretion to use either the new regulations, or the previous regulations at 36 CFR 220, when completing NEPA. This project was developed and completed per the previous regulations.

8 Expected Implementation Date

This decision can be implemented immediately upon my signature. I expect that implementation of road maintenance and improvement activities will begin in the summer of 2025, and implementation of in-channel restoration work in 2026.

9 Contact Information

For additional information concerning the Trinity River Watershed Project and this decision, please contact Bobbie Miller, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, 204 W. Alma St., Mt. Shasta, CA 96067, 530-643-6226. Electronic copies of the Draft Decision Notice, final EA, and supporting documentation are available at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/shasta-trinity/projects/63121 .

Digitally signed by
RACHEL BIRKEY
Date: 2025.07.14 16:30:41
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RACHEL A. BIRKEY Date
Forest Supervisor, Shasta-Trinity National Forest

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