

Categorical Exclusion Documentation
CE# CA-180-08-78

A. Background

BLM Office: CA-180, Folsom Field Office

Project Title – North Fork American Fish and Frog Study

Location – North Fork American upstream of Iowa Hill Bridge. The BLM portion is part of a larger study involving 20 miles of the North Fork American River. Four sampling sites will be set up along the 20-mile stretch, one of which is upstream of Iowa Hill Bridge.

Description and Rationale, including any Stipulations – This study involves a multi-year assessment of key biological and physical indicators of the structure and health of this stream ecosystem. This project will provide a reference for the management of other rivers on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. The upper North Fork American River (NFAR) is largely free-flowing, and thus provides a baseline that can be used for comparison to the many heavily regulated rivers in the region, and development of management plans during FERC re-licensing. The study will be conducted by University of California Davis, in collaboration with California State University Sacramento and the Upper American River Foundation. The study will involve surveys for fish, benthic macroinvertebrates, and frogs, as well as physical characterization of the stream habitat. Objectives of the study are to determine:

1. The relationships between natural flow regime, aquatic habitat, fish, and foothill yellow-legged frogs (a species of special concern) at sites along a range of elevations in the NFAR.
2. The seasonal movement of native and non-native trout along the NFAR, including Lake Clementine, in relation to flow, temperature, and spawning habitat. Rainbow trout in the NFAR that are descended from steelhead (prior to the construction of Folsom, Nimbus, and Clementine Dams) may still possess a fluvial life history in which they migrate large distances upstream to spawn during high winter flows.
3. Physical aspects of the lotic and riparian environment that include sediment load, substrate conditions, shade, temperature, groundwater/surface water interaction, geomorphic features, and surface water flow conditions.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

This action conforms to the Sierra Resource Management Plan (approved February, 2008) because it is specifically provided for or is clearly consistent with the RMP objectives and decisions as follows: Fish and Wildlife Objective “Provide opportunities research and education.”

C. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

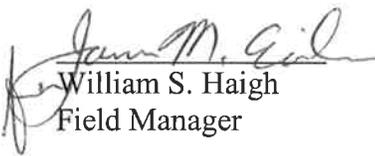
The action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1 Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate for this action because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in

516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply (see attached).

I considered impacts to fisheries. Up to 40 rainbow trout and brown trout will be captured by angling, radio-tagged, and released back to the river at the location from which they were captured. The fish should not be harmed in the process. Even if all 40 fish were harmed, a very unlikely scenario, the impact to the overall trout population would be insignificant. Also, considered were impacts to the stream substrate through the physical sampling of this substrate. Habitat sampling will involve the measurement of the size of stream substrate (e.g. gravel) by hand, but substrate will not be moved within nor removed from the system. Also considered was the impact of installation of a stationary radio antenna, receiver, and solar panel at each of the four sample sites. The footprint of this equipment will be approximately 4 square feet, and the installations will be removed at the end of the project. Project impacts are minimal.

D. Signature


William S. Haigh
Field Manager

8/15/08
Date

E. Contact

For more information, contact Peggy Cranston, Wildlife Biologist, (916) 985-4474 or pcransto@ca.blm.gov.

Review of Extraordinary Circumstances

The Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3A (3) requires review of the following “extraordinary circumstances” (516 DM 2 Appendix 2) to determine if an otherwise categorically excluded action would require additional environmental analysis/documentation.

1) *Have significant impacts on public health or safety.*

Yes No

2) *Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.*

Yes No

3) *Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].*

Yes No

4) *Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.*

Yes No

5) *Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.*

Yes No

6) *Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.*

Yes No

7) *Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.*

Yes No

8) *Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat.*

Yes No

9) *Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.*

Yes No

10) *Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).*

Yes No

11) *Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).*

() Yes (x) No

12) *Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).*

() Yes (x) No

Reviewers

Albee Franzen
Botany/Invasive Species

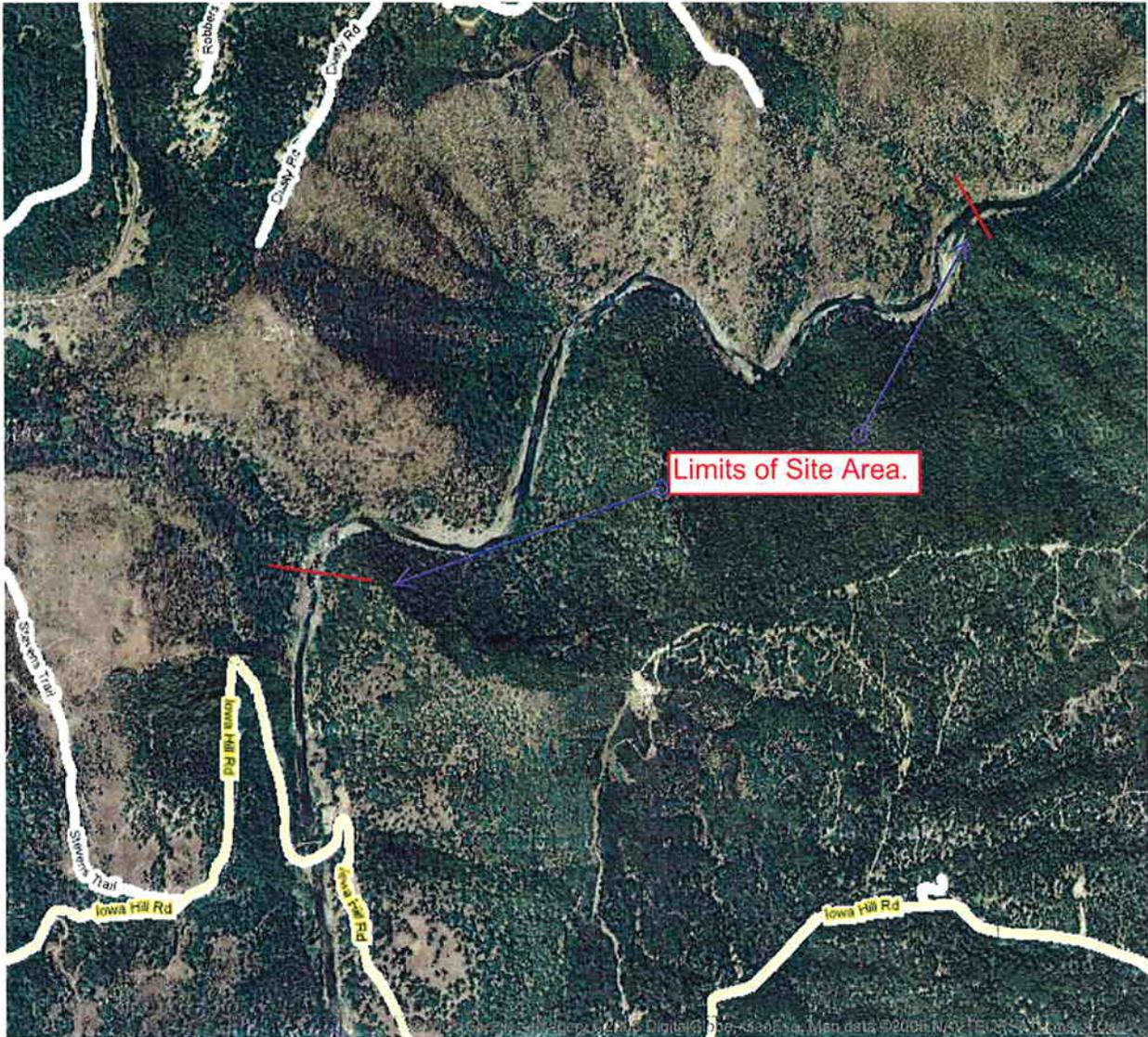
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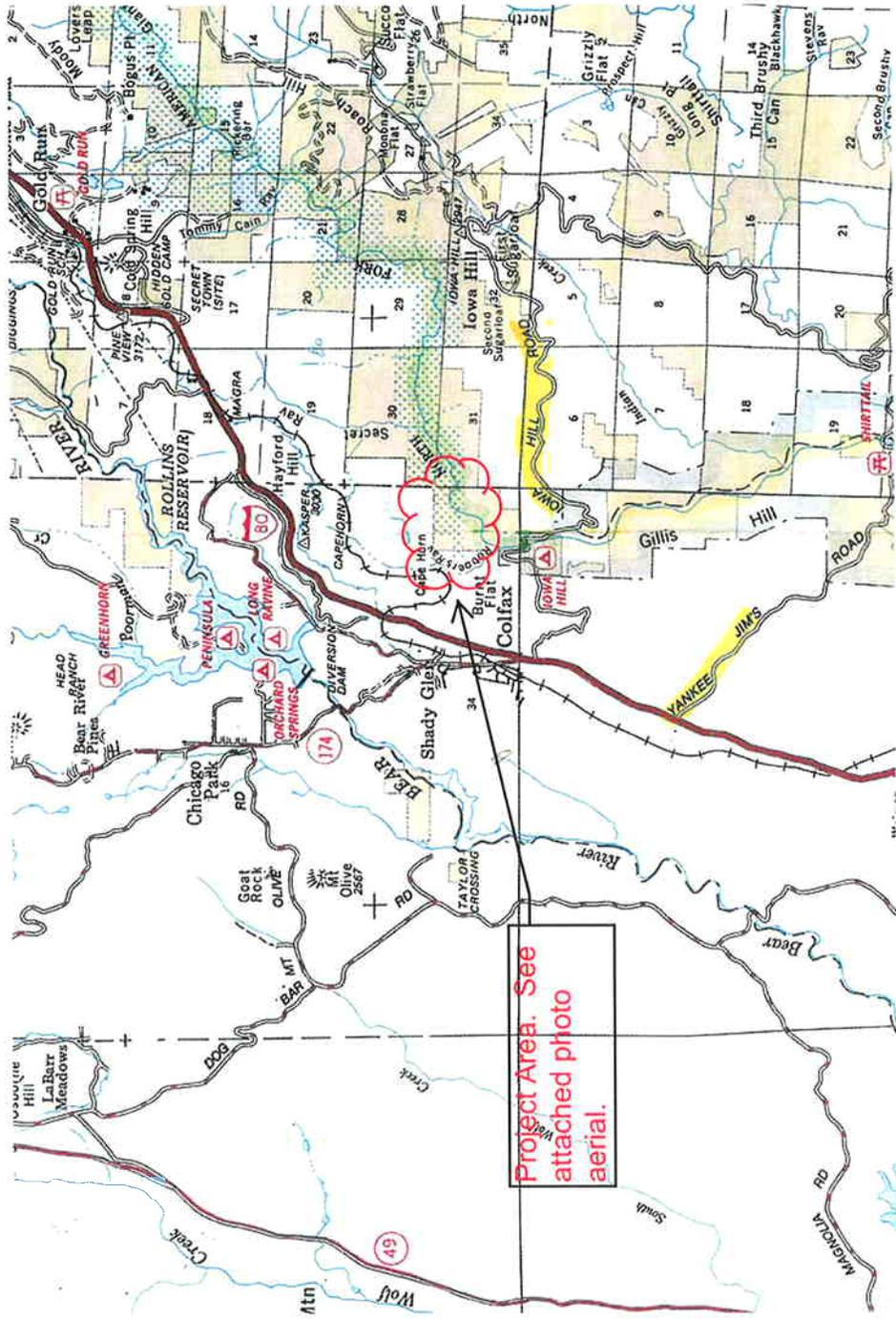
Jimmie B...
Cultural Resources

8/15/08

Peggy Cranston
Wildlife

8/14/08





Project Area. See attached photo aerial.

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Folsom Field Office
63 Natoma Street
Folsom, California 95630**

8100
CA-180.27

August 15, 2008

MEMORANDUM

To: Field Manager

From: James Barnes, Archaeologist

Re: Section 106 compliance for the UC Davis fish and frog study
in the North Fork American River canyon, Placer County

The Folsom Field Office (BLM) is planning to allow UC Davis researchers to study fish and frogs on BLM-administered land within the North Fork American River canyon. We would not allow camping and their proposed field methods would have little or no impact on the environment. Of note, six antenna assemblies would be placed above the floodplain at various points along the river. The assemblies would be without substantial attachment to the ground other than a few rocks (about 20 pounds each) used to lean into each leg of the tripod to provide stability. The potential to negatively affect cultural properties is slim, but UC Davis researchers have agreed to show me the proposed assembly sites before they are installed to help prevent potential negative effects to cultural properties. With this caveat, I believe that BLM authorization of the study would not affect significant cultural properties, and the finding of "no effect" would complete BLM's obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, pursuant to our statewide Protocol Agreement.



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
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63 Natoma Street
Folsom, California 95630

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August 15, 2008

LETTER TO FILE

SUBJECT: Section 106 compliance for the UC Davis fish and frog study in the North Fork American River canyon, Placer County

PROJECT: UC Davis fish and frog study in the North Fork American River canyon

REPORT #: N/A

DATE(S) COMPLETED: August 15, 2008

TYPE OF SURVEY: Class III

CULTURAL PPROPERTIES PRESENT: Undetermined

ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES: Undetermined

DETERMINATION OF EFFECT: No effect

SHPO CONSULTATION/SECTION 106 STEPS COMPLETED: All

DISCUSSION: This letter to the file documents that I have reviewed the above listed Cultural Resource Inventory Report. Pursuant to the Protocol Agreement (2004) between BLM California and the State Historic Preservation Officer, I affirm that all necessary steps have been taken to identify, record, and determine effects on cultural properties with the undertaking's area of potential effects. This report has been completed by an approved staff specialist and is in accordance with all standards and guidelines as outlined in the Protocol Agreement (2004).

I concur with the findings of this analysis.



William S. Haigh, Field Manager (CA-180)

8/15/08

Date

Matt Dulcich, Project Manager
University of California, Davis
Office of Resource Management and Planning
373 Mrak Hall
Davis, CA 95616

6670
CA180.23

August 8, 2008

Re: Permission to access BLM property

Dear Mr. Dulcich,

With this letter, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acknowledges that University of California Davis and its project partners (including, but not limited to California State University, Sacramento, and the Upper American River Foundation) will be accessing BLM property along the North Fork American River above the Iowa Hill Bridge to sample geomorphology, groundwater hydrology, fish, and amphibians in the NFAR.

Project activities that will require access through or onto BLM property may include: habitat sampling; fish surveys; amphibian surveys; and benthic macroinvertebrate surveys. BLM understands that the researchers have all the necessary handling permits for the project. It is understood that the project will not require camping on BLM property or disrupt regular BLM activities.

BLM understands that the majority of project activities requiring access through BLM administered lands will be conducted between March 2009 and September 2011.

Environmental impacts from the project will be minimal. Up to 40 rainbow trout and brown trout will be captured by angling, radio-tagged, and released back to the river at the location from which they were captured. Habitat sampling will involve the measurement of the size of stream substrate (e.g. gravel) by hand, but substrate will not be moved within nor removed from the system. A stationary radio antenna, receiver, and solar panel will be installed at each of the four sample sites. The footprint of this equipment will be approximately 4 square feet, and the installations will be removed at the end of the project. The project has undergone CEQA compliance with a categorical exclusion analysis. BLM is in the process of issuing a Categorical Exclusion NEPA document for this project.

BLM requests a copy of any report that come from the studies.

Sincerely,

W.S. Haigh
Field Manager



Matt Dulcich
 <medulcich@ucdavis.edu>
 08/15/2008 06:58 AM

To "James_Barnes@ca.blm.gov"
 <James_Barnes@ca.blm.gov>
 cc "Peggy_Cranston@ca.blm.gov"
 <Peggy_Cranston@ca.blm.gov>
 bcc
 Subject RE: UC Davis fish proposal for North Fork of the American River

James-
 Thanks. A field trip would be great. We can schedule the field trip at your convenience anytime in the fall or winter before the tripods are ready for placement. Let me know if you have any other questions like this that I can help with.

Matt

-----Original Message-----

From: James_Barnes@ca.blm.gov [mailto:James_Barnes@ca.blm.gov]
 Sent: Thursday, August 14, 2008 3:08 PM
 To: Matt Dulcich
 Cc: Peggy_Cranston@ca.blm.gov
 Subject: RE: UC Davis fish proposal for North Fork of the American River

I'm the NEPA coordinator and archaeologist here. Any flat ground above high water mark in the study area could have historic-era features, cabins, and the like, and perhaps even prehistoric lithics. I don't want you disturbing these resources. What I want to do then is have a field trip with Peggy to show us the proposed antenna sites BEFORE installation. If you agree to this and the fieldtrip does not need to be in the next couple of weeks, then we can complete the CX and my cultural resource bit (Section 106) before 8/22/08. J.

Matt Dulcich
 <medulcich@ucdavis.edu>

08/14/2008 02:02 PM

"James_Barnes@ca.blm.gov"
 <James_Barnes@ca.blm.gov>

To
 cc

Subject
 RE: UC Davis fish proposal for
 North Fork of the American River

James-
 Thanks for the help. I have already received the permission letter. The quick response to my request from last week is really helpful.

Regarding the CX:

1) The antenna assembly will be above the floodplain. It will rest on the ground without substantial attachment other than a few rocks (about 20 pounds each) that will lean into each leg of the tripod to provide stability.

2) A copy of the CX would be great. The permission letter and the CX are needed for the grant application.

Let me know if I can help answer any questions.

Matt

-----Original Message-----

From: James_Barnes@ca.blm.gov [mailto:James_Barnes@ca.blm.gov]
Sent: Thursday, August 14, 2008 1:55 PM
To: Matt Dulcich; PeggyCranston/CASO/CA/BLM/DOI@mail3.blm.gov
Subject: FW: UC Davis fish proposal for North Fork of the American River

Matt,

We're processing your request. You may have already received a permission letter from BLM. We are working on the NEPA CX document.

I have one question for you:

Will the stationary radio antenna, receiver, and solar panel be installed in the floodplain? If not, how is it attached to the ground?

Will you need a copy of the CX document once it is signed?

James