

Notice of Intent to use FONSI in Lieu of Negative Declaration for the Waduh Unit Resilience Project at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge

The California State Coastal Conservancy (the Conservancy), acting as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), intends to use the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in lieu of preparing a Negative Declaration for a project to conduct habitat restoration on the Waduh Unit of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge on the north spit of Humboldt Bay. The FONSI covers FWS' project to restore 300 acres of coastal dunes located on the Waduh Unit to build sea level rise resiliency and restore critical dune habitat and function along 4.5 miles of the north spit (outer coast) of Humboldt Bay. FWS will remove invasive European beachgrass, yellow bush lupine, iceplant, pampas grass, and non-native annual grasses from 136 acres of coastal dunes within the 300 acre Waduh Unit and restore it to native dunegrass, native dune mat species, and dune forest. A combination of removal methods will be used and can include prescribed burn, spot/targeted application of herbicides, manual removal, flaming, and heavy equipment. The purpose of the Conservancy action is to restore 80 acres of back dune habitat within the Waduh Unit and is covered by the FONSI.

The CEQA Guidelines direct state agencies to use a FONSI prepared pursuant to NEPA rather than preparing a new CEQA document if the FONSI has been or will be prepared before a Negative Declaration or EIR would otherwise be completed for the project and the FONSI complies with the Guidelines. California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15221. In April 2015, FWS prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project to evaluate the potential adverse effects to the environment. FWS made the EA available for public comment from June 4, 2020 to July 8, 2020. FWS determined the project would not result in significant impacts to the environment and on April 13, 2021 adopted a FONSI.

The Conservancy has reviewed the EA and FONSI and believes that the federal documents comply with the CEQA Guidelines. The Conservancy will consider adopting the FONSI and authorizing funding for the project at its scheduled public meeting on December 1, 2022. The Conservancy intends to conduct the meeting in person on the central coast at a location to be determined and on Zoom. Meeting information will be posted at <https://scc.ca.gov/public-meetings/>

The documents are available for review at the offices of the Conservancy, which is located at 1515 Clay Street, 10th floor, Oakland, CA, 94612.