

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

FOR THE

ENGLISH MEADOW FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Nevada Irrigation District (NID) is the Lead Agency for the English Meadow Floodplain Enhancement and Restoration Project (Proposed Project or Project). The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Project is published and open for public review and comment from May 12, 2021 through June 13, 2021.

Project Objectives:

The Nevada Irrigation District (NID or District) plans to implement floodplain restoration and forest management activities on 380 acres within the headwaters of the Middle Yuba River in Nevada and Sierra Counties, California. Project activities will take place about 1 mile upstream of Jackson Meadows Reservoir, a critical NID storage facility used for recreation, clean hydroelectric power production and water supply for 25,000 agricultural and drinking water customers in Nevada, Placer and Yuba Counties.

Consistent with the District's land use objectives, the purpose of this project is to improve watershed health, floodplain function and forest resilience in English Meadow and the Middle Yuba River headwaters to achieve the following benefits:

- Reduce the transport of bedload and fine sediment from the upper watershed into Jackson Meadows Reservoir (maintain reservoir water storage capacity).
- Increase seasonal retention and release of precipitation in the meadow floodplain aquifer.
- Enhance habitat for meadow-dependent species.
- Improve forest health to reduce wildfire risk through fuels reduction.
- Increase snowpack and surface flow through mechanical thinning of the forest community on surrounding slopes.
- Reduce conifer encroachment into the meadow.

Brief Project Description:

The existing condition of English Meadow and the surrounding forests reflects the complex history of inundation and draining, construction of ditches, grazing, and logging at the site. The rapid draining of water that resulted from the destruction of historic dams at the bottom of the meadow likely initiated the incision of the Middle Yuba River channel, and its subsequent disconnect from the meadow floodplain. The Middle Yuba River in the Project area currently exhibits extreme high and low flows, resulting in erosion of the river's banks as precipitation and snowmelt quickly flow through the meadow and into Jackson Meadows Reservoir, without spilling out over the floodplain. This, in combination with construction of ditches that dry the meadow, has resulted in a shift in the proportion of wetland versus upland habitat.

The hydrologic regime in the Project area is highly dynamic, with watershed conditions resulting in short bursts of high flows, typically associated with rain-on-snow events in the spring. The high-velocity flows have resulted in headcutting and channel incision. In functional channel/floodplain systems, the flows overbank every 1.5 to 2 years. However, because of channel incision, Middle Yuba River flows within the Project area are estimated to overbank only every 10 years. The infrequent overbanking of the stream, coupled with the increased rate at which water flows from the meadow due to incision, have altered soil conditions and plant assemblages within the meadow. Restoration/enhancement activities aim to return

moisture to soils in the floodplain and increase groundwater hydrologic activity via modified process-assistance based techniques using on-site materials.

The following activities are planned as part of the Project:

- **Mainstem and Floodplain Treatments:** Two of the proposed treatment methods—debris jams and riffles—are intended to reduce headcutting, bank erosion, and channel incision by 1) raising the elevation, or thalweg, of the mainstem channel, thus allowing flows to access the existing meadow floodplain aquifer and 2) slowing the velocity of flows, allowing for the natural aggradation of bedload material. Other treatments to be implemented within the mainstem channel and/or within the associated floodplain include bank stabilization; fill of erosional features (gullies) and artificial channels (manmade ditches); berm removal; and revegetation of bare areas.
- **Floodplain Vegetation Treatments:** Approximately 200 acres of habitat within the meadow basin will be treated. Treatment methods will include conifer removal (i.e., mastication/mechanical thinning by hand; individual selection and removal of trees) and placement of log barriers to obstruct cattle movement.
- **Forest Treatments:** A 175-acre area of upland conifer forest around the meadow will be thinned to increase water yield (i.e., by increasing accumulated snow load or reducing water resources consumed by trees) and to reduce future conifer encroachment into the meadow, and to decrease the potential for high-intensity wildfire.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** NID has partnered with an interdisciplinary team of restoration experts to collect 4 years of pre-Project baseline data. Post-project implementation monitoring will be performed in Years 3, 4, and 5 of the Project (at a minimum) to evaluate the effectiveness of the channel and floodplain treatments, and to determine whether modifications or additional treatments are necessary.

Project Location:

The Project lies in the headwaters of the Middle Yuba River watershed, approximately 35 miles northwest of Lake Tahoe, and straddles the boundary between Nevada and Sierra counties. The closest city is Truckee, in Nevada County (Map 1). The Middle Yuba River, which bisects English Meadow, flows into Jackson Meadows Reservoir approximately 1 mile downstream of the Project. The Project is located in Section 4 of Township 18 North, Range 13 East of the Mt. Diablo Meridian and Baseline (Map 1). The Project is located on NID-owned lands.

Project Issues Discussed in the Document:

Project issues discussed in the document are provided in the table below.

Aesthetics	Land Use and Planning
Agriculture and Forest Resources	Noise
Air Quality	Population and Housing
Biological Resources	Public Services
Cultural Resources	Recreation
Energy	Transportation/Traffic
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Tribal Cultural Resources
Geology and Soils	Utilities and Service Systems
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Wildfire
Hydrology and Water Quality	

With incorporation of mitigation measures, none of these effects will be significant.

Public Review:

The NID English Meadow Floodplain Enhancement and Restoration Project IS/MND is published and open for review and comment from May 12, 2021 to June 13, 2021. The IS/MND is available for public review electronically only, on the NID website (<https://www.nidwater.com/english-meadow>).

Written comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. on June 13, 2021.

NID encourages the public to submit written comments or questions regarding the IS/MND to:

English Meadow Floodplain Restoration and Enhancement Project
c/o Kris Stepanian
Nevada Irrigation District Business Center
1036 West Main Street
Grass Valley, California 95945
E-mail: stepiank@nidwater.com

Input may also be provided at an informational public meeting starting at 6:00 p.m. on June 02, 2021 via Zoom.

- The Zoom meeting can be accessed from a computer, tablet or smartphone at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83748037762>
- To join as a conference call, dial:
 - +1 (669) 900-6833 or
 - +1 (253) 215-8782 or
 - +1 (346) 248-7799 or
 - +1 (929) 205-6099 or
 - +1 (301) 715-8592 or
 - +1 312 626 6799
- The Webinar ID is 837 4803 7762.