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DRAFT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**SAN MARCOS RIVER SECTION 206
AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT
SAN MARCOS, TEXAS**

9 A Detailed Project Report and integrated Environmental Assessment (DPR/EA) have been
10 prepared to evaluate environmental restoration alternatives in the San Marcos River and its
11 tributaries, from Spring Lake Dam to the confluence with the Blanco River, in San Marcos,
12 Texas. The proposed project would restore valuable aquatic and riparian habitats along the
13 San Marcos River, which have been degraded by recreational use, invasive exotic plant and
14 animal species, and sedimentation. Aquatic and riparian exotic plants would be controlled,
15 riparian habitats on managed lands and at discharge points would be restored, and sediment
16 accumulated in the San Marcos River channel would be removed. The proposed project would
17 provide benefits to the federally listed species Texas wild-rice (*Zizania texana*), San Marcos
18 gambusia (*Gambusia georgei*), fountain darter (*Etheostoma fonticola*), and San Marcos
19 salamander (*Eurycea nana*), and their designated critical habitat, as well as the federal
20 candidate species golden orb (*Quadrula aura*) and Texas pimpleback (*Quadrula petrina*).
21 Further, the proposed project expands upon the habitat restoration for federally listed endemic
22 species through its connectivity with the Spring Lake Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem
23 Restoration project that was recently implemented upstream of the proposed project area.
24

25 Nine restoration measures were developed and carried forward for cost-benefit analysis. Each of
26 these measures was independent of the others, meaning each could serve as a stand-alone plan.
27 The nine measures were controlling discharge, increasing the width of the riparian forest,
28 improving wetlands in the watershed, controlling riparian exotic plants, controlling aquatic exotic
29 plants, removing sediments from the channel, creating recreational access structures, controlling
30 nuisance waterfowl, and educating the public. Alternatives evaluated included a No Action Plan,
31 and all combinations of the nine measures. All restoration plans were evaluated using an
32 incremental cost analysis to ensure that the most cost-effective plan was selected. The Proposed
33 National Environmental Restoration (NER or recommended) plan included measures to control
34 aquatic and riparian exotic plants, measures to restore wetlands, and measures to remove
35 accumulations of sediments from the San Marcos River channel.
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37 The Proposed NER Plan would have short-term and minimal adverse effects on soils and
38 surface water quality as a result of soil and substrate disturbance and consequent erosion and
39 turbidity. Soil erosion would be minimized through development of a Stormwater Pollution
40 Prevention Plan and implementation of appropriate best management practices during the
41 project construction. Consistency of all Proposed NER Plan activities with a Texas Pollutant
42 Discharge Elimination System General Permit would be certified by the Texas Commission on
43 Environmental Quality prior to construction. Measures to restore the riparian zone, redirect
44 recreation from sensitive areas, and control surface discharges would all have long-term
45 beneficial effects on soils and water quality. The Proposed NER Plan would have a negligible
46 effect on floodplains and would result in a net increase in the acreage and quality of wetlands in
47 the study area. Removal of sediments, restoration of wetlands, and removal of exotic aquatic
48 vegetation would occur within jurisdictional waters of the U.S. The Proposed NER Plan would
49 meet the conditions of Nationwide Permit (NWP) 27 for Stream and Wetland Restoration
50 Activities. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has issued a water quality

1 certification for NWP 27; thus, no further coordination for Section 401 water quality certification is
2 required.

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4 The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) completed
5 Section 7 Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation for the proposed project on October 18,
6 2013. The proposed project would likely adversely affect three species listed under the ESA:
7 Texas wild-rice, fountain darters, and San Marcos gambusia. The proposed project would likely
8 adversely affect critical habitat of the fountain darter. However, it is the USFWS's Biological
9 Opinion that the effects of the proposed action and cumulative effects would not jeopardize the
10 continued existence of these species or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat. The
11 USACE and the City of San Marcos would be responsible for implementing the conservation
12 measures identified in the Biological Opinion, as well as complying with all of the terms and
13 conditions required to implement reasonable and prudent measures for conservation of the
14 species. These measures include, but are not limited to, planting of dredged areas with native
15 macrophytes and sweeping for darters prior to disturbance of the stream bed or aquatic
16 vegetation.

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18 The removal of exotic riparian and aquatic species and replanting of native vegetation would
19 have the potential to adversely impact known and unknown cultural resources that may be
20 located under the existing structure and pavement. Potential adverse impacts on cultural
21 resources would be avoided and mitigated, as necessary, through coordination and consultation
22 with the State Historic Preservation Officer, where additional archaeological testing, monitoring,
23 and demarcation of areas to be avoided will occur. Any hazardous materials found in the
24 project area would be removed in accordance with all applicable federal and state regulations.

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26 Based on a review of the information contained in this EA, it is concluded that the
27 implementation of the San Marcos River Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project is
28 not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment
29 within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as
30 amended.

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35 _____
36 Charles H. Klinge, Jr.
37 Colonel, US Army Corps of Engineers
38 District Engineer

_____ Date