

2017 Annual Vegetation and Noxious Weed Management Report

Santa Felicia Project

FERC License No. 2153-012



Prepared for:
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

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Prepared by:



UNITED WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
“Conserving Water Since 1927”

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual report presents information related to implementation activities conducted between January 1 and December 31, 2017, in accordance with the “Vegetation and Noxious Weed Management Plan” (Management Plan) developed to comply with requirements of United Water Conservation District’s (United) license issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Activities conducted during 2017 included conducting annual monitoring to evaluate the success of the previous year’s (2016) tamarisk treatment activities, conducting tamarisk treatment activities, and consulting with regulatory agencies to review future vegetation management strategies.

Annual monitoring was conducted on April 7, 2017 to evaluate the success of the previous year’s (2016) tamarisk treatment activities. Monitoring indicates that the 2016 treatment effort was effective. Very few signs of new growth or regrowth were observed. The majority of previously treated tamarisk individuals observed during monitoring exhibited no regrowth. Tamarisk control activities conducted in 2017 were focused in areas that are reasonably accessible along the west shore of Lake Piru, from Reasoner Canyon south to Santa Felicia Dam (Priority Treatment Area). Specifically, 2017 treatment efforts were focused on the few areas where new growth and regrowth were observed during annual monitoring (i.e., below Santa Felicia Dam and Reasoner Canyon). Follow-up tamarisk control activities were performed on November 6, 7, and 8, 2017.

2.0 BACKGROUND

United owns and operates the Santa Felicia Project (Project) on Piru Creek in Ventura County, California. FERC issued a new license to United for the operations of the Project on September 12, 2008 (FERC Project No. 2153). Article 405 of the license requires United to file a vegetation and noxious weed management plan for lands within the project boundary that incorporates provisions of the U.S. Forest Service’s (USFS) section 4(e) condition 18(b). United filed the Management Plan, on October 12, 2010, and FERC issued an order modifying and approving the Management Plan on February 14, 2011.

The Management Plan requires United to produce annual technical reports presenting the results of monitoring and control efforts conducted throughout the prior year (reporting period). This report describes activities performed between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2017.

The Management Plan specifically identifies that the report must contain the following components:

1. Summary of target noxious weed populations including existing and new populations in areas tied-to Project actions or effects.
2. Project area map depicting point and polygon data for target noxious weed populations as recorded for the Noxious Weed GIS Data Layer.
3. Description of control areas and treatments used over the past year.
4. Brief evaluation of priority treatment areas.
5. Recommended control measures for each population/treatment area including proposed chemical controls.
6. Description of revegetation efforts conducted during the reporting period.
7. Evaluation of revegetation efforts conducted prior to and within the reporting period.
8. Summary of proposed revegetation areas.

In addition, on January 29, 2013, FERC issued an order approving and amending a plan to use existing vegetation in Reasoner Canyon Creek to satisfy bank stabilization requirements of Article 407 of the license. The order requires United to include a description of any revegetation activities conducted during the year in Reasoner Canyon Creek for bank stabilization purposes in this annual report.

The regional location of Lake Piru is illustrated in Figure 1. Figure 2 illustrates the Priority Treatment Area, and observations of new growth or regrowth made during the annual evaluation survey.

3.0 2017 NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

During the 2017 reporting period, United conducted monitoring to evaluate the efficacy of the previous year's (2016) treatment efforts, and conducted follow-up tamarisk control treatment activities. The treatment evaluation survey was conducted on April 7, 2017. Treatment activities were conducted on November 6, 7, and 8, 2017.

3.1 *Priority treatment areas*

Areas designated as part of the Priority Treatment Area were those areas above the high water mark of Lake Piru, which are reasonably accessible, along the west shoreline, from below Santa Felicia Dam north to Reasoner Canyon (Figure 2). This Priority Treatment Area was selected to exclude areas within the Management Area that are transitional (i.e., may become inundated or scoured following storm events) or contain sensitive species or habitats.

3.2 *Description of control areas and treatments*

Eradication treatments were conducted in the Priority Treatment Area (Figure 2) on November 6, 7, and 8, 2017. Channel Islands Restoration (CIR), United's project contractor, used a basal bark herbicide (imazapyr based) application for medium to large individuals (greater than one-inch diameter stalk) and foliar application for small individuals (less than one-inch diameter stalk). Treatment efforts in 2017 were focused on areas treated in 2016, with special focus on areas where new growth and regrowth were observed during the 2017 annual evaluation monitoring (discussed in detail in section 3.3 below). Specifically, 2017 treatment efforts were focused on areas within the Santa Felicia spillway channel, near the Santa Felicia Dam outlet works and lower Piru Creek, and areas within Reasoner Canyon above the high water mark of Lake Piru.

3.3 *Summary of noxious weed populations*

Monitoring conducted in 2017 to evaluate the efficacy of the 2016 treatment efforts indicates that 2016 treatment efforts were relatively successful. Tamarisk infestations in the Priority Treatment Area appear to be under control with very limited signs of new growth and regrowth. The 2016 basal bark treatment appears to have been effective with only one individual tamarisk in the spillway channel showing green wick. One individual tamarisk near Santa Felicia Dam, which was treated with cut-and-paint in 2014, was observed to be re-sprouting a small amount of vegetation. Two small individuals, potentially representing new growth were observed; one in Reasoner Canyon and one near Santa Felicia Dam. The majority of previously treated tamarisk plants do not exhibit any regrowth and are considered successfully treated. Individual tamarisk plants observed during the annual evaluation survey in 2017 are illustrated in Figure 2.

4.0 REVEGETATION EFFORTS

The Management Plan stipulates conditions that trigger revegetation requirements (i.e., particular project activities resulting in ground disturbance greater than 0.10 acres). No such activities occurred in 2017, and no revegetation activities were conducted during the reporting period.

4.1 Evaluation of revegetation efforts

No revegetation activities were triggered or conducted during the reporting period.

4.2 Summary of proposed revegetation areas

No revegetation activities are currently proposed for future implementation.

4.3 Reasoner Canyon revegetation activities

No revegetation activities occurred during 2017 in Reasoner Canyon Creek for bank stabilization purposes.

5.0 USFS CONSULTATION

United has scheduled a meeting scheduled to consult with LPNF on February 1, 2018, to discuss strategies to address tamarisk infestations within the Management Area.

5.1 Tamarisk management in environmentally sensitive areas

Tamarisk plants that fall within critical habitat and areas where arroyo toads may be expected to breed have been excluded as priority plants for removal under the Eradication Plan. United's Eradication Plan is based on a model developed by the LPNF for the purpose of eradicating tamarisk from Piru Creek, Lockwood Creek, Cuyama River, Santa Ynez River, Sisquoc River, and Arroyo Seco River. LPNF finalized their plan, "Los Padres National Forest Tamarisk Removal Project," filed a final environmental impact statement for the plan, and on September 9, 2016, issued a draft record of decision, selecting an alternative as the proposed action (LPNF 2016). The selected alternative includes measures to minimize and avoid effects to arroyo toads and their critical habitat. LPNF has begun implementation of their plan in other watersheds within the forest boundary (not the Piru Creek watershed). United will continue to consult with LPNF, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and CDFW to determine if United can safely remove tamarisk plants in sensitive areas without affecting the arroyo toad or its critical habitat using the approach developed by LPNF. Depending on the outcome of that consultation, United will work with the consulting agencies and FERC to determine how to proceed.

5.2 Annual coordination meeting

USFS section 4(e) conditions 2 and 18(b) require that United consult annually with the USFS on issues related to conditions of the license and implementation of the Management Plan. United met with LPNF on February 2, 2017, to provide an update on license activities and the vegetation and noxious weed management planning process as well as anticipated future management activities. Minutes from the meeting were filed with FERC on March 8, 2017.

6.0 FUTURE ACTIVITIES

United has scheduled a meeting to consult with LPNF on February 1, 2018, to provide an update on Management Plan activities.

United will conduct a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the 2017 treatment effort during the spring of 2018. United will then conduct follow-up treatment activities in late 2018, as informed by the treatment evaluation surveys and the outcome of consultation with LPNF. United will also continue to consult with LPNF to develop plans to control and treat tamarisk infestations that fall within areas where eradication activities have the potential to affect arroyo toads or designated critical habitat.

7.0 REFERENCES

Los Padres National Forest (LPNF). 2016. *Los Padres Tamarisk Removal Project; Final Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Record of Decision*. September 9, 2016.
Available Online: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=28147>. Accessed November, 2016.

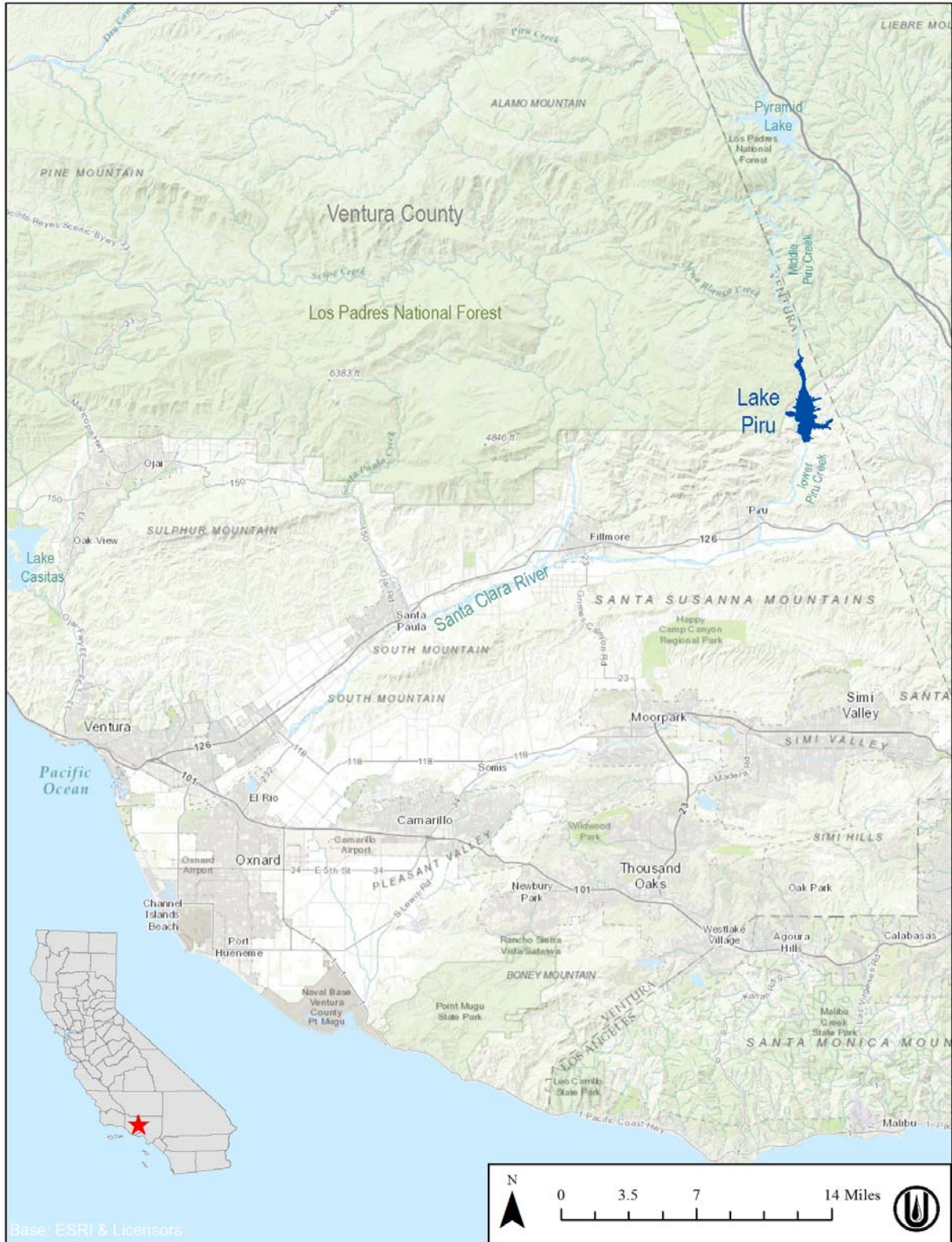


Figure 1 – Lake Piru Regional Location



Figure 2 – 2017 Priority Treatment Areas and Evaluation Observations