



US Army Corps
of Engineers.
Seattle District

Notice of Preparation

Operations Division
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Seattle, WA 98124-3755
ATTN: Chuck Ebel (PM-PL-ER)

Public Notice Date: August 16, 2007
Expiration Date: September 7, 2007
Reference: PL-07-15
Name: Bonners Ferry Levee Rehabilitation

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District (Corps) plans to prepare, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental assessment (EA) for a proposed levee repair on the Kootenai River, near the City of Bonners Ferry, Boundary County, Idaho. During May and June 2006, high flows in the Kootenai River downstream of Libby Dam caused erosion and scouring along portions of the right-bank levee that shields the City of Bonners Ferry sewage treatment facility, an important public utility protective of human life, health, and safety.

AUTHORITY

The Flood Control Act of 1950 (PL 81-560), Section 204, authorized the construction and operation of Libby Dam in Montana. While the Corps is under no legal obligation to perform these repairs, the Corps is choosing to exercise its discretion to proceed with these repairs to this non-federal levee.

PROPOSED ACTION

The preferred alternative would be for the Corps to repair the damages by re-sloping the over-steepened bank to a more stable slope, adding a three-foot blanket of armor rock, and constructing a ten-foot by fifteen-foot weighted toe (the riverward edge of the levee). The riverward face of the levee would be re-graded to a slope of 2 horizontal:1 vertical and the existing embankment material would be incorporated into the repair, thus reducing the amount of material required to be imported to the site. The levee repair would extend approximately 300 lineal feet, and would incorporate large woody debris (LWD) and planting of willows along the riverward slope of the levee into the design. The treatment plant outfall pipe, located approximately midway along the lineal extent of the project area, would be extended outward beyond the new slope protection.

The no-action alternative, which must be considered under NEPA, would be to not do any repairs and to leave the levee in its existing damaged state.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Due to the scheduled timing of the in-water portion of construction (October 2007) and design of the levee, no long-term impacts to the environment are anticipated. Generally, effects to fish and wildlife would be temporary, and would primarily occur during construction, although sturgeon reproduction might benefit from the rock placement in the long term. Additional willow plantings and habitat features on the site may increase some fish habitat values. Overall effects, both adverse and favorable, are anticipated to be insignificant.

The Corps believes that the proposed project **may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect** endangered Kootenai River white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*), or the threatened Columbia basin Distinct Population Segment of bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), or to adversely modify designated critical habitat for sturgeon. The rock that would be used to construct the weighted toe would have the same characteristics as the rock used for the pilot sturgeon restoration project constructed downstream near Shorty's Island in 2006, providing an additional site for eggs to adhere in this reach of the Kootenai River. This could provide a recovery benefit for the sturgeon. Project construction is scheduled during the approved in-water work window to avoid periods of greatest sturgeon vulnerability and highest expected use. In addition, with the incorporation of willow plantings into the design along with placing LWD, the project would minimize potential adverse effects to sturgeon and bull trout.

No significant adverse impacts to water quality as a result of the levee repairs are expected, since the rock would be clean.

No historic properties are expected to be impacted, since the local levees are of relatively recent construction and thus constitute disturbed sites, but an effects determination will be made and tribal and state consultation will occur under Sec. 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act before work takes place.

The Corps has made a preliminary determination that the environmental impacts of the proposal can be adequately evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act through preparation of an environmental assessment (EA). Preparation of an EA addressing potential environmental impacts associated with the levee rehabilitation project is currently underway.

This work constitutes repair of an existing structure and will be performed by the Corps of Engineers, and is thus considered exempt from permitting requirements under the Clean Water Act.

The Corps invites submission of factual comment on the environmental impact of the proposal. The Corps will consider all submissions received before the expiration date of this notice. The nature or scope of the proposal may be changed upon consideration of the comments received. The Corps will initiate an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and afford all the appropriate public participation opportunities attendant to an

EIS, if significant effects on the quality of the human environment are identified and cannot be mitigated.

Comments should reach this office, Attn: Environmental Resources Section, not later than September 7, 2007 to ensure consideration. Requests for additional information should be directed to Lester Soule, Project Manager, at 206 764-3699.