



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

Seattle District

Notice of Preparation

Environmental Resources Branch
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Seattle, WA 98124-3755
ATTN: Amanda Ogden (PM-PL-ER)

Public Notice Date: April 8, 2011
Expiration Date: May 9, 2011
Reference: PL-10-13
Project Name: Cedar River I-Type Floodwall
Vegetation Removal

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District (Corps) requires additional work to the Flood Control Works (FCW) on the Cedar River Section 205 Flood Control Project. This Federally authorized project, constructed between 1998 and 2000, is located upstream of the mouth of the Cedar River, from river mile (RM) 0 to approximately RM 1.5, in the City of Renton, King County, Washington and included the construction of an I-type floodwall. The required work consists of vegetation removal along 1620 feet of the I-type floodwall structure on the left bank of the Cedar River adjacent to the Renton Municipal Airport. The proposed work is described below and shown on the enclosed drawings. The purpose of this Public Notice is to solicit comments from interested persons, groups, and agencies.

AUTHORITY

This action is pursuant to Public Law 84-99, "Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies."

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Cedar River Section 205 FCW project included constructing earthen levees combined with steel sheet-wall pilings and concrete floodwalls along both banks of the river and dredging in the river channel. Dredging is designed to reduce flooding that results from sediment deposition in this reach of the Cedar River that is a constructed artificial channel. Levees and floodwalls were raised along both banks from its confluence with Lake Washington to Williams Avenue, 1.25 miles upstream. Dredging lowered the river channel approximately four feet deeper from the mouth of the river to the Logan Avenue Bridge (at RM 1), gradually decreasing the slope upstream another ½ mile to meet the existing grade. Its goal was to reduce potential flood damage along approximately 1.5 miles of the lower Cedar River through downtown Renton, primarily protecting the Boeing aircraft manufacturing plant and the Renton Municipal Airport. An overflow section downstream of the south Boeing Bridge on the left bank insures that if the FCW project is exceeded, flooding will occur on the less developed left bank. Boeing has added hydraulic jacks to the south Boeing Bridge to lift it clear of floodwaters. This feature is not part of the Federal project. At the time of the original construction, much of the vegetation, including trees were not removed. Corps guidance for I-type floodwalls now requires their removal.

This Section 205 project is designed to provide protection from periodic, recurring floods up to the 100-year event level. The Section 205 Project O&M plan includes a requirement to re-dredge as needed to remove sediment deposits in the project reach. Because of this sedimentation and re-dredging cycle, the level of protection can vary through the life of the project. While maintenance dredging was anticipated to occur every 3 to 10 years to maintain the flood protection benefits of the Section 205 Project, it has been more than 10 years since the last dredging. Maintenance dredging is anticipated to be needed within the next 3 to 5 years, depending upon sediment deposition rates within the project area. However, the work proposed at this time only includes removal of vegetation.

PURPOSE AND WORK OBJECTIVE

The proposed work would remove vegetation that is out of compliance with Corps guidance for I-type floodwalls. The guidance states that a minimum vegetation-free zone (with the exception of grass species for erosion control) of 15-feet must be maintained for access and structural integrity. The I-type floodwall in its current state does not comply with this guidance.

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed work involves removal of 180 trees (65 of which are 6" diameter at breast height (DBH) or larger) and clearing of all vegetation, within 15-feet of the I-type floodwall structure. To help offset impacts of vegetation removal, an area at the project site along the upstream portion of the floodwall has been identified for planting willow stakes along 200 feet at the river's edge. This area extends beyond the 15-foot vegetation free buffer and will provide onsite riparian vegetation to offset a portion of the impacts of the proposed action. All work will be done in the dry.

In addition, an off-site planting area has been identified to offset the loss of tree cover at the project site. The planting site is upstream from the project site near RM 5.0 on the Cedar River at the City of Renton's Ron Regis Park (Figure 1). The proposed off-site plan includes planting of 195 trees which will provide a 3:1 replacement ratio for the trees larger than 6" DBH that will be removed during spring 2011. See Attachments for the planting plan and location map. The project consists of the following elements to meet Corps vegetation standards for floodwalls and restore native vegetation cover to the Cedar River:

- Removal of 180 trees (65 of which are 6" DBH or larger) within 15-feet of the floodwall along 1620 feet from the Logan Avenue Bridge (RM 1) downstream to the south Boeing Bridge. The trees are predominantly red alder (*Alnus rubra*) with one western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*). Trees within 15-feet of the floodwall will be cut using a chainsaw and then hoisted over the floodwall. A portable stump grinder will grind all stumps to ground level. All trees beyond 15-feet from the floodwall will remain.
- Removal of shrubs and brush within 15-feet of the floodwall along 1620 feet from the Logan Avenue Bridge (RM 1) downstream to the south Boeing Bridge. Dominant

understory vegetation is Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus* spp.). Vegetation will be hand-cleared and disposed of off-site.

- The 15-foot buffer area will be raked following vegetation removal and hydroseeded using a native grass seed mix.
- Planting of willow stakes will occur at the upstream portion of the floodwall with a varying width within an area 200 feet long by 5-10 feet wide. Stakes will be inserted using rebar created pilot holes at approximately 12" spacing along the river's edge just above the ordinary high water (OHW) mark.
- Offsite planting at Ron Regis Park will occur within an area approximately 1060 feet long by 30 feet wide (0.73 acres). A total of 195 trees will be planted with an equal distribution between Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and western red cedar. Two staggered rows will be created with 10-foot spacing between each tree and 10-foot spacing between rows. Buffers will be created along the two access paths to minimize possible disturbance to the plantings.

Construction is anticipated for spring 2011, to coincide with low flows in the Cedar River. Once started, vegetation removal and plantings is expected to take about 1 week.

Three other alternatives were also evaluated, they include "no action," "vegetation removal only" and "floodwall setback."

No Action: The No-Action alternative would leave the floodwall vegetation in place. This alternative would not be in compliance with Corps I-type floodwall guidance and raises structural concerns, therefore this alternative was not considered further.

Vegetation Removal Only: The Vegetation Removal Only alternative would remove 180 trees (65 of which are 6" diameter at breast height (DBH) or larger) and all vegetation, within 15-feet of the I-type floodwall structure along 1620 feet from the Logan Avenue Bridge (RM 1) downstream to the south Boeing Bridge would be cleared. Trees within 15-feet of the floodwall will be cut using a chainsaw and then hoisted over the floodwall. A portable stump grinder will grind all stumps to ground level. All trees beyond 15-feet from the floodwall will remain. Removal of shrubs and brush within 15-feet of the floodwall along 1620 feet from the Logan Avenue Bridge (RM 1) downstream to the south Boeing Bridge. Dominant understory vegetation is Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus* spp.). Vegetation will be hand-cleared and disposed of off-site. The 15-foot buffer area will be raked following vegetation removal and hydroseeded using a native seed mix. No planting would be completed to offset the impacts of the vegetation removal under this alternative. Because this alternative did not address environmental concerns caused by the vegetation removal, this alternative will not be considered further.

Floodwall Relocation/Setback: The Floodwall Relocation/Setback Alternative would relocate the floodwall structure further landward to allow existing vegetation to remain outside of the 15-foot vegetation free zone. The existing floodwall would be removed and a new floodwall would be constructed approximately 20-feet landward from the existing location. No riverward vegetation would be removed under this alternative. This

alternative would impact Perimeter Road West which runs adjacent to the Renton Municipal Airport. This alternative would have a substantial cost, transportation impacts and would not be feasible within the project timeline. Accordingly, this alternative will not be considered further.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

The Corps preliminary analyses of the principal effects to the proposed vegetation removal and planting alternative are as follows:

Wetlands: Construction activities will be done so as to avoid any impacts to wetlands. The repairs will remain in the existing floodwall footprint above ordinary high water. Access roads are existing and do not affect jurisdictional wetlands. No wetland impacts are anticipated.

Biological Resources: In the project area, the Cedar River is a confined, single-thread, low gradient artificial channel. In this reach, the river is highly modified and provides generally poor habitat for the fish and other aquatic species. The river is channelized with armored banks and there is very little pool habitat.

The following threatened species are expected to be found in the general project area:

- Coastal/Puget Sound Bull Trout
- Puget Sound Chinook Salmon (and its critical habitat)
- Puget Sound Steelhead

Potential effects of the proposed work on threatened or endangered species and designated critical habitat will be addressed per Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Other non-listed salmon species in the reach include sockeye and coho. Other listed species potentially occurring in King County are grizzly bear, Canada lynx, marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, Steller sea lion, humpback whale, southern resident killer whale and gray wolf; however, they are not expected to be present in the project area due to specialized habitat requirements, lack of tolerance for human activity, or both.

The construction is anticipated for early spring. No in-water work will occur as all vegetation removal will be done in the dry.

Water Quality: The project will utilize best management practices, such as working completely in the dry, as well as soil disturbance minimization measures, to ensure no sediment enters the river during construction. All cleared areas will be mulched, seeded and planted with appropriate native grass species to prevent storm water runoff after completion. No turbidity is expected to occur.

Cultural Resources: To comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a Corps archaeologist conducted a cultural resources reconnaissance survey of the proposed project Areas of Potential Effect. No resources were found during the survey. Cultural resources studies conducted for the project included a search of the Washington

Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) Electronic Historic Sites Inventory Database, and other background and archival research.

Air Quality: Construction vehicles and heavy equipment will temporarily and locally generate gasoline and diesel exhaust fumes, carbon dioxide (CO₂), carbon monoxide (CO) and dust on roadways. The proposed activity constitutes maintenance of an existing facility, generating an increase in direct emissions of a criteria pollutant or its precursors that is clearly *de minimis* and is therefore exempted by 40 CFR Section 93.153(c)(2)(iv) from the conformity determination requirements. Emissions generated by the proposed activity are expected to be minor, short-term and well below the *de minimis* threshold. Unquantifiable but insignificant exacerbation of effects of CO₂ emissions on global climate change is anticipated.

Noise: Temporary increases in noise would occur as a result of vegetation removal activities. Work will be done during daylight hours.

Traffic: Construction-related traffic is not expected to create disruption of local traffic as adequate staging areas and access areas have been identified. Efforts will be made to minimize any disturbances to traffic patterns during vegetation removal.

Navigation: The work will occur out of the water; therefore no impacts to navigation are expected.

Treaty Rights: At this point, the work is not expected to impact Treaty Rights. However, coordination with affected Tribes is ongoing.

Cumulative Effects: The vegetation removal would result in a loss of vegetative cover to the Cedar River, which will be offset through on-site willow plantings and off-site tree planting.

COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Corps initiated informal consultation for the proposed action with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concerning anticipated effects on threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat, pursuant to Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act. A biological evaluation was sent based on the determination that the project is not likely to adversely affect threatened Puget Sound Chinook salmon, Puget Sound steelhead, Coastal/Puget Sound bull trout and their designated critical habitat. The evaluation included a determination that the project will not reduce the quality and/or quantity of Essential Fish Habitat for Pacific salmon under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Concurrence letters were received from NMFS and USFWS dated 10 December 2010 (Reference # 2010/05546) and 11 January 2011 (Reference # 13410-2011-I-0047) respectively.

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The City of Renton is considered coastal under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). Pursuant to the CZMA, a determination of consistency with the State which includes the City of Renton approved shoreline management plan will be needed.

The work will not involve a discharge of fill material into waters of the United States. Therefore, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act is not applicable.

The project is not anticipated to cause violations to any standards under the Clean Air Act.

EVALUATION

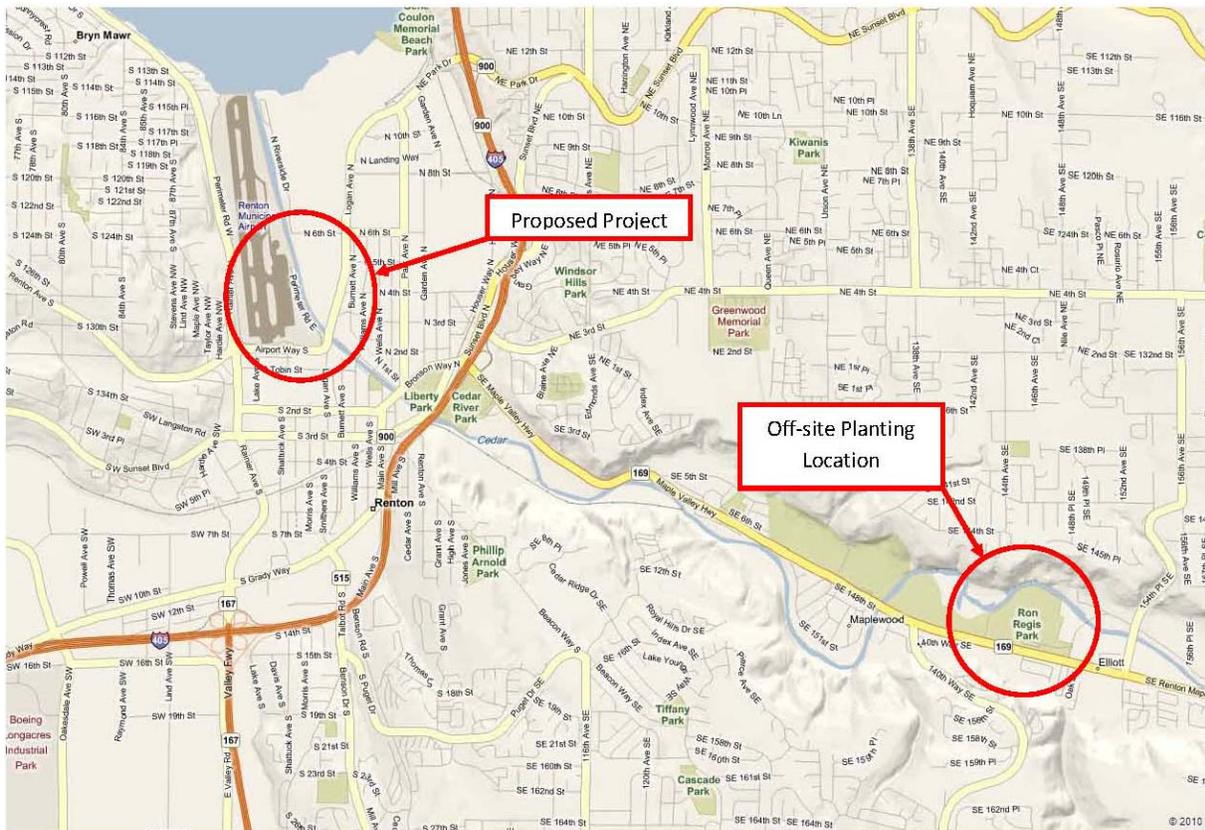
The Corps has made a preliminary determination that the environmental impacts of the proposal can be adequately evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act through preparation of an environmental assessment (EA). Preparation of an EA addressing potential environmental impacts associated with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

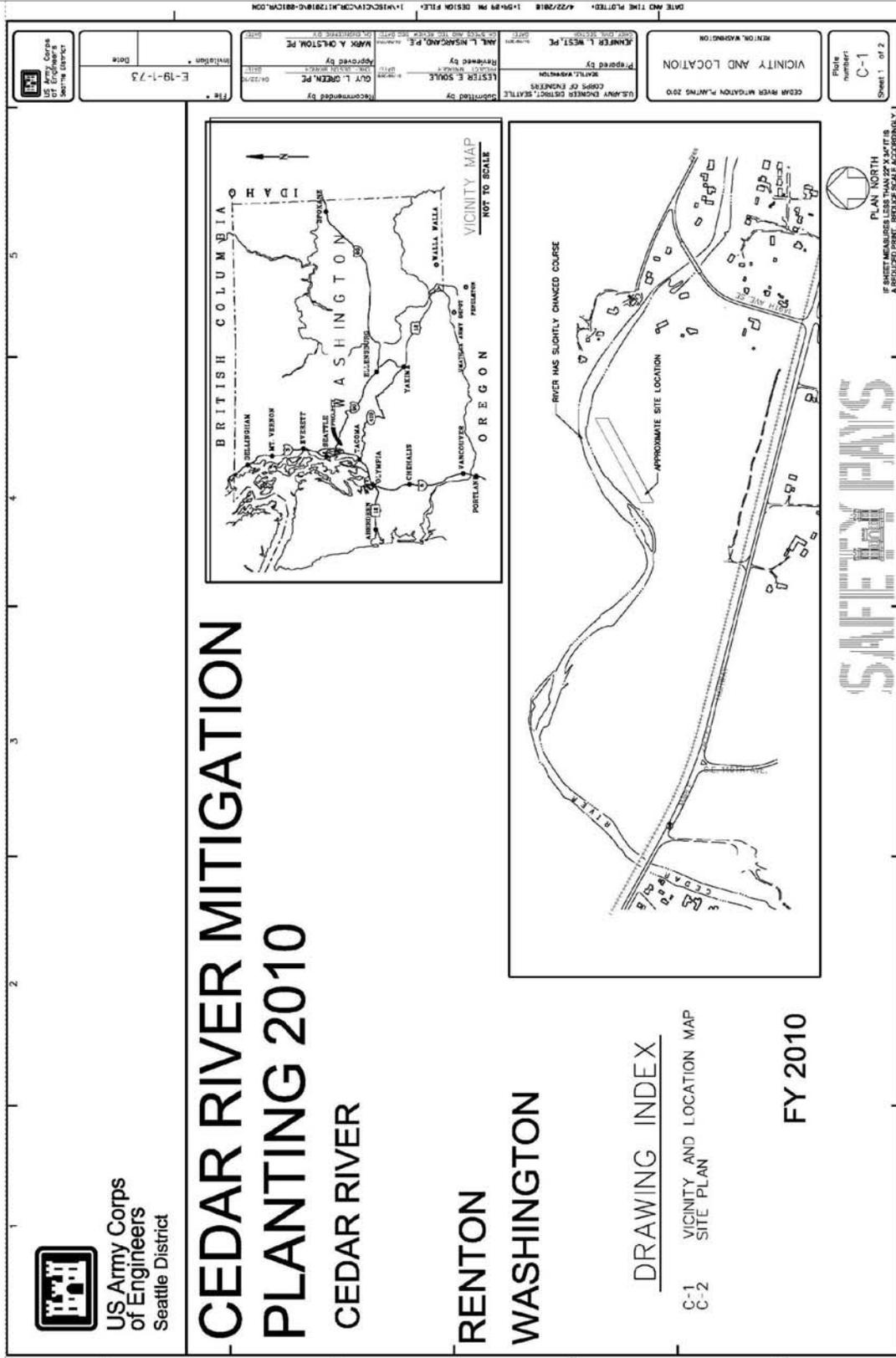
The Corps invites submission of factual comment on the environmental impact of the proposal. Comments will also be considered in determining whether it would be in the best public interest to proceed with the proposed project. The Corps will consider all submissions received before the expiration date 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 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.

Submit comments to this office, Attn: Environmental Resources Section, no later than *30 days after the date of this notice* to ensure consideration. In addition to sending comments via mail, comments may be e-mailed to amanda.ogden@usace.army.mil. This Notice of Preparation can be found at the following website: http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/ers/doc_table.cfm under “Cedar River I-Type Floodwall Vegetation Removal.” Requests for additional information should be directed to Ms. Amanda Ogden at 206-764-3628 or the above e-mail address.

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PROJECT LOCATION AND PLANTING DESIGN





SITE PHOTOS



Photo 1. View looking downstream towards the South Boeing Bridge, the southern extent of the proposed vegetation removal.

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Photo 2. View looking upstream towards Logan Avenue of the I-type Floodwall on the left bank of the Cedar River with Renton Airport to the right (West).



Photo 3. View looking downstream near the upstream extent of the project area, note mostly small diameter red alder with invasive understory.