

Army Corps of Engineers grants permit to Port of Seattle for 3rd runway fill

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SEATTLE—The Army Corps of Engineers issued a permit today to the Port of Seattle to permanently fill 19.62 acres of wetlands and temporarily impact 28.78 acres of wetlands for their 3rd Runway project.

District Engineer Col. Ralph Graves determined, based on all the data and analysis available to the Corps, that the proposal is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative available to the applicant and is not contrary to the public interest.

The Port of Seattle applied to the Army Corps of Engineers for a permit to fill wetlands as required by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The Corps' primary area of concern was impact to the aquatic environment. The Corps also analyzed impacts to the human environment, including noise, water quality, economics, aesthetics and other public interest factors.

The Corps permit allows fill in wetlands to begin upon issuance, if the permit's special and general conditions are met. The Port must also comply with the conditions of the Water Quality Certification issued by the Washington State Department of Ecology Sept. 21, 2001. The Corps evaluated each PCHB condition to determine whether they needed to be added as special conditions to the Corps permit and ended up adding 6 of the PCHB conditions. They must also comply with state and local requirements.

In addition to the Corps' independent analysis of the project, the Federal Aviation Administration produced an Environmental Impact Statement, which was released in 1996, and completed a supplemental EIS in 1997. The Corps was a cooperating agency on that EIS. The project was also subject to review under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To ensure compliance with the ESA, special conditions have been added to the permit.

The Corps first issued a Public Notice regarding the proposal December 1998, and held a public hearing, to solicit comments. A revised public notice, after additional wetlands were found, went out September 1999. The most recent public notice went out December 2000, followed by public hearings in January 2001.

The Corps is requiring both on and off-site mitigation. The on-site mitigation includes 11.95 acres of restoration, 22.32 acres of enhancement, 54.93 acres of buffer (primarily riparian) enhancement, and 2.35 acres of wetland preservation. The off-site mitigation includes 29.98 acres of creation, 19.50 acres of enhancement, and 15.90 acres of buffer enhancement. This mitigation replaces the functions of those wetlands that are being impacted.

This news release along with Frequently Asked Questions is available at <http://www.nws.usace.army.mil>. The Record of Decision and permit is available at:

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