

## Cherry Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project Delays

Warm winter weather may delay Cherry Creek environmental restoration fish passage improvement project construction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers

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SEATTLE - The Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, says there is potential for a construction delay on the Cherry Creek ecosystem restoration project in St. Maries, Idaho. The project is co-sponsored by Benewah County and the Corps. The delay is due to recent unusual weather conditions.

The project purpose is to install a new box culvert with a "natural" rock bottom that will improve fish passage.

According to project manager, Alan Coburn because of El Nino and the accompanying warmer and wetter weather, Cherry Creek is flowing much heavier and Lake Coeur d' Alene is much higher than normal, thus flooding the construction site. Also, because of the warmer weather road load restrictions are being implemented earlier to protect roadway integrity. Additionally, the unseasonably warm weather could result in an early snow melt with associated higher Cherry Creek flows.

The 21-day forecast by the National Weather Service thru Feb. 18 calls for a continued warm and wet weather trend with brief periods of freezing. This weather pattern is unlikely to improve the currently flooded conditions at the construction site. Coburn says the biggest concern is public safety. "Even though this is a potential a delay in construction work for the project, being able to construct the project in better stream and lake conditions when the fish aren't present, is very important," he says.

Tentative plans are to begin construction in the last two weeks of Feb. if the dryer, colder weather holds and Lake Coeur d'Alene levels drop.

The situation will be re-evaluated with Benewah County officials and a final determination on whether construction will start or not will be made on or about Feb. 12. If construction is unable to start this month, it will be bumped to late summer or early fall which is the next earliest time available within the critical "fish window" time period between now and October. The fish window is a pre-determined time period when construction can occur with little or no adverse impacts to the fish.

Please call Alan Coburn, Project Manager (206) 764-6849 for more information.

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