

Appendix B: Draft FONSI



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SEATTLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 3755
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98124-3755

February 17, 2004

CENWS-PM-PL-ER

**Meridian Valley Creek Realignment Project
Kent, King County, Washington**

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

Background.

Meridian Valley Creek is a three-mile long stream that drains approximately 1,449 acres. It ultimately joins Big Soos Creek near the corner of 256th St. SE and 148th Ave SE.

Sometime after 1968, the lower portion of the creek was diverted from its natural course and directed into a concrete raceway. Although numerous species of fish are found within the raceway, it does not provide ideal habitat for fish. This reach of the creek has been channelized, and there is little in-stream cover or riparian vegetation, and no off-channel refuge habitat. The stream is located less than 10 feet from the roadside of 256th St. SE, increasing the potential for poor water quality as a result of road runoff into the stream. Fish are likely to be flushed out of the creek during high flow events. At low flow several areas of the flume present passage barriers.

The project site is located south of 256th St. SE and west of 148th Ave. SE in the northeast quarter of Section 27, Township 22 North, and Range 5 East of the Willamette Meridian in the city of Kent, in King County, Washington.

Proposed Action.

The Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Kent propose to remove Meridian Valley Creek from the concrete flume, moving the stream away from 256th St. SE. The relocated stream will flow into a constructed streambed that will meander through a large wetland that borders Big Soos Creek. The relocated stream will run approximately 1,150 feet from the existing box culvert beneath 256th St. SE to its confluence with Big Soos Creek. At the upper end of the project, a concrete extension (approximately 30 additional feet) will be added to the existing box culvert to allow for future road widening activities, and to direct the stream away from the toe of a steep slope and into the newly constructed streambed. The new streambed will parallel 256th St. SE for approximately 200 feet along the toe of a steep slope. The stream channel then turns to the southeast, dropping gently to a broad wetland plain. The stream continues its southeastern course through the wetland to its confluence with Big Soos Creek. This portion of the stream will contain numerous off-channel habitat areas to provide refuge, rearing, and foraging opportunities for juvenile fish. These areas will also serve to store water during high flow events.

This project will increase available spawning habitat for adult fish, and will enhance rearing, foraging, and refuge habitat for juvenile salmonid and resident fish in the lower portion of Meridian Valley Creek by creating off-channel habitat areas, removing the stream from a source of potential water quality contamination, and through provision of a riparian buffer.

Summary of Impacts.

A draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the proposed action and is attached. The draft EA describes the environmental consequences of the project, which are briefly summarized below.

The project will result in the loss of 0.3 acres of the existing emergent and scrub-shrub wetlands on-site, and numerous trees, shrubs, and understory plants will be removed to accommodate the new channel alignment. The stream channel banks and all other disturbed areas will be restored with native emergent and herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees.

There will be small-scale, temporary increases in turbidity within the wetland and Big Soos Creek as a result of construction activities, particularly those in the lower reach of the channel alignment through the wettest portion of the wetland. Localized shifting of sediments will continue sporadically as the new stream heals and adjusts. High flows during the winter and spring following construction will continue to mobilize sediments in the project area, potentially contributing to small increases in turbidity over that normally seen during high flow events.

In order to reduce temporary increases in turbidity and potential related effects on juvenile salmonids in Big Soos Creek, all 'in-water' construction work will take place during the appropriate fish window (August 1 to August 31, or as otherwise determined by WDFW) and during the driest time of the year. Construction techniques, sequencing, and timing will minimize soil disturbance to the extent practical to reduce the generation of turbidity during connection of the new channel to the Big Soos Creek. Similarly, the design and implementation of the erosion-control and the Storm Water Pollution Prevention (SWPPP) plans will incorporate best management practices (BMPs) to further reduce the duration and magnitude of the temporary increases in turbidity.

The in-water construction of this project will occur when federally listed threatened juvenile and adult Puget Sound chinook salmon and Coastal/Puget Sound bull trout are least likely to be present in Meridian Valley and Big Soos Creeks, and during the portion of the year when bald eagles are not nesting and are most tolerant of disturbance. The Corps has received concurrence with a 'may affect, but not likely to adversely affect' determination for listed species in relation to the Meridian Valley Creek realignment project via a concurrence letter dated March 27, 2001 from USFWS and via a concurrence letter dated April 10, 2001 from NOAA Fisheries.

Professional cultural resources studies are being conducted for the proposed project. The studies completed to date included an examination of the archaeological and historic site

records at the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP), a pedestrian survey, and archaeological testing of the project area. The records search indicated that no properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or the state historic site register are located within the proposed project area. The field studies have not been completed as of this date and are continuing. If historic properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are confirmed to be present in the project area, a programmatic agreement for data recovery (if necessary) will be developed in consultation with the Muckleshoot Tribe and the OAHP that describes specific measures to mitigate adverse effects resulting from the project.

Impacts to the human environment will also be temporary and localized. Construction vehicles may temporarily disrupt local traffic, increase air emissions and noise in the vicinity of the site, increase the volume of traffic on adjacent streets during excavation, and decrease the aesthetic attractiveness of the general area during excavation of the site. Noise, traffic, and air quality issues will be managed through implementation of appropriate control plans. Thus, these impacts will be temporary and highly localized.

Finding.

Based on the analysis detailed in the draft EA (attached) and summarized above, this project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and, therefore, does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement. A 404(b)(1) evaluation is being prepared.

Date

Debra M. Lewis
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer