



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Seattle District

Notice of Preparation

Emergency Management Branch
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ATTN: Catherine Desjardin (EC-DB-CS)

Public Notice Date: September 27, 2006
Expiration Date: October 11, 2006
Reference: PL-06-04
Name: Naches River 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, an environmental assessment (EA) for two proposed levee repairs on the Naches River, near the City of Naches, Yakima County Washington. During May and June 2006 rainfall and snowmelt resulted in a 4.5 year peak flooding event in Yakima County, Washington. During this event, the Ramblers Park Levee and the City of Naches Levee sustained damage from high velocity flood flows in the Naches River. The flood scoured the toe protection and caused erosion within the levee embankments along a 300-foot and 500-foot section of these levees respectively.

AUTHORITY

The levees are non-federal, and the projects are active in the Public Law (PL) 84-99 Rehabilitation and Inspection Program. The Corps has performed 11 repairs to these two levees since 1949.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Corps proposes to repair the damages to the pre-flood level of protection while setting the levees back from the river approximately 20 feet. This allows the repairs to be conducted with the least amount of disturbance to the river channel by beginning the repair of the toe (the riverward edge of the levee) at the current waters edge and working back to the levee top, rather than placing rip rap into the water column at the pre-flood waters edge and working back to the levee top. The riverward face of the levee will be re-graded to 2H: 1V and the existing embankment material will be incorporated into the repair, thus reducing the amount of material required to be imported to the site. Both levee repairs will include planting willows along the riverward slope of the levee. The Ramblers Park Levee repair will require repair to approximately 300 lineal feet of levee and include a Large Woody Debris and rock structure and the upstream end of the levee. The City of Naches Levee repair will require approximately 500 lineal feet of the levee to be repaired.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Due to the scheduled timing of the in-water portion of construction (October 11-October 31) and design of the levees, no long-term impacts to the environment are anticipated.

Any effects to fish and wildlife will be temporary and primarily occur during construction. Additional willow plantings and habitat features to the sites may increase some fish habitat values. Overall effects, both adverse and favorable, are anticipated to be insignificant.

The proposed project **may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect** steelhead and bull trout or modify designated critical habitat for these species. The procedure to repair the levee was designed to avoid or minimize potential "take" during construction by setting the levee back 20 feet, while minimizing in-water construction. Project construction is scheduled during the approved in-water work window to avoid periods of greatest steelhead vulnerability and highest expected use. In addition, the incorporation of willow plantings into the design along with placing LWD upstream of the project will minimize potential effects to Steelhead.

The Corps believes that this action will have **no effect** on bald eagles as no eagle nests are near the project sites and the projects should not have any adverse effects to eagle habitat or forage.

No significant adverse impacts to water quality as a result of the levee repairs are expected. The procedure to set the levees back enables construction to begin at the current waters edge and work landward greatly reducing the amount of in-water work needed.

Impacts to vegetation will be minimal as the Ramblers Park Levee is essentially devoid of vegetation and the City of Naches levee is sparsely vegetated with willows planted by the Corps in 1996. The County has retained the willows currently present on the City of Naches Levee so that they can be incorporated into the design of the repair and will be used to replant the levee.

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.

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 October 11, 2006 to ensure consideration. Requests for additional information should be directed to Catherine Desjardin, Project Manager, at 206 764-3452.