

APPENDIX B.
Draft Finding of No Significant Impact



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

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

CENWS-PM-PL-ER

**WILLAPA RIVER SECTION 1135 ESTUARINE HABITAT RESTORATION
PACIFIC COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

(DRAFT) FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (DRAFT)

1. Project Authority and Purpose. Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-662, as amended) allows the Corps of Engineers to modify the structure or operation of a Corps project to restore fish and wildlife habitat, or to construct restoration projects in locations where an existing Corps project has contributed to the degradation of the quality of the environment. The proposed project is intended to replace some of the estuarine habitat lost when dredged material was placed in intertidal wetlands as part of the Corps' Willapa River and Harbor Project. Between the 1930s and early 1970s, material dredged from the inner Willapa River Channel below Raymond was disposed on adjacent diked wetlands. During this time, approximately 675 acres of productive intertidal and shallow subtidal habitats were affected by Corps pipeline dredge disposal activities. The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife is the local sponsor for this Section 1135 project.

2. Proposed Action. The proposed action is one component of a larger multi-agency effort. The Section 1135 project will restore tidal inundation to property owned by WDFW which has been diked for the past 90 years. This will occur by removing approximately 10,000 linear feet of dikes. The dike material will be used to backfill the borrow ditches adjacent to the dikes. Farm drainage ditches and borrow ditches along US 101 will also be filled. Remnant tidal channels will be excavated to restore natural tidal hydrology. A cross dike will be constructed to prevent tidal inundation of neighboring properties. A highway pull-off will be constructed to provide access and parking for school buses and other vehicles. Most of the earthwork would occur in the dry, prior to dike removal. Approximately 70,000 cubic yards of material would be excavated and approximately 70,000 cubic yards of material would be placed as fill.

4. Summary of Impacts. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the proposed work. This document describes the environmental consequences of the proposed work, which are briefly summarized below.

The proposed project would re-establish 300 acres of salt marsh, and restore off-channel rearing and refuge habitat for juvenile salmonids and other estuarine fish species. The project is

expected to result in an increase in the capacity of the lower Willapa River to support fish populations. In addition, waterfowl and shorebird use of the property is likely to increase.

The Corps has coordinated with State and Federal resource agencies to assure careful consideration of fish and wildlife resources. No adverse impacts to threatened or endangered species are anticipated. Impacts of construction activities on salmonids will be reduced and/or avoided through implementation of timing restrictions.

Unavoidable adverse impacts will generally be localized in nature, short in duration, and minor scope. None of these adverse impacts would be significant either individually or cumulatively. Construction activities may temporarily disrupt local and tourist traffic on the portion of US 101 running through the site, but no full road closures will occur. The transport of fill material to the project site from commercial borrow sites would result in an increase in heavy truck traffic along US 101. This impact will not be significant because it would be short-term and would occur over stretches of highway that regularly accommodate heavy truck traffic (e.g., logging trucks). Short-term degradation of water quality in the Willapa River would occur during removal of the dike. A temporary increase in turbidity and a temporary decrease in dissolved oxygen levels are anticipated. Monitoring will occur to ensure that all State requirements for the protection of water quality are met. Temporary displacement of wildlife may occur due to the noise associated with construction activities. Owls and other species dependant on small rodents or other drier habit prey items would likely be permanently displaced, but raptors will continue to use the area for hunting waterfowl in the new salt marsh.

A reduction in mosquito abundance is expected to result from the proposed project. In order to confirm this conclusion, the project site and adjacent undiked areas will be sampled during summer 2004. Using this data, as well as extant literature and other field data, the study will characterize how the proposed project may affect mosquito production in the vicinity of South Bend, and evaluate the likelihood that the project would increase exposure of South Bend residents to West Nile virus. If the results of this study indicate that mosquito production would increase as a result of tidal flooding of the riverward side of US 101—particularly for aggressive biters or known West Nile virus vectors—the Corps would develop and implement appropriate impact reduction measures to mitigate for this impact. If no adequate impact reduction measures were available, this finding will be withdrawn and the project would not be constructed.

5. Finding. Based on the analysis described above and provided in more detail in the EA, this project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human or natural environment, and therefore does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Date

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Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer