

**FINAL  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
DWORSHAK RESERVOIR PROJECT MASTER PLAN  
AHSAHKA, IDAHO  
2015**

**1. BACKGROUND:**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District (Corps), proposes to adopt a Master Plan (MP) as the strategic land use planning document to guide comprehensive management and development of all project recreational, natural, and cultural resources. The Corps prepared a Public Use Plan (PUP) for the Dworshak Operating Project (Project) in 2011. The PUP updated the land classifications from the original 1970 Design Memorandum 10, with new quantified classifications, providing information and analysis to address management necessary to accommodate changing conditions. From initial fill in 1973, the reservoir operated near full-pool during the summer recreation season. Since 1992, to improve habitat conditions for Endangered Species Act listed stocks, the reservoir has been lowered as much as 80 feet each summer to provide cold water for migrating salmon. The PUP defined management strategies for acceptable public use and access for lands and waters during low pool operations. In January 2013, the Corps updated their MP policy, Engineering Pamphlet 1130-2-550, requiring the completion and approval of a MP for operating projects. The PUP did not meet all of the requirements. Accordingly, a new MP was developed.

**2. PURPOSE AND NEED:**

The purpose of this action is to develop a MP for the Project. The MP is a strategic land use management document that guides the comprehensive management and development of all project recreation, natural, and cultural resources throughout the life of the water resources project. The MP directs efficient and cost-effective management, development, and use of project lands.

It is a vital tool for the responsible stewardship and sustainability of project resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Corps regulations require each Civil Works operating project to develop a master plan. As stated in EP 1130-2-550, MP goals must include the following:

- a. Provide the best management practices to respond to regional needs, resource capabilities, suitability's, and expressed public interests consistent with authorized project purposes;
- b. Protect and manage project natural and cultural resources through sustainable environmental stewardship programs;
- c. Provide public outdoor recreation opportunities that support project purposes and public demands created by the project itself while sustaining project natural resources and special

programs, such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, cultural resources protection, and protection of endangered species and critical habitat;

d. Recognize the particular qualities, characteristics, and potentials of the project;

e. Provide consistency and compatibility with national objectives and other state and regional goals and programs.

An all-inclusive approach is needed to respond to public requirements while meeting all other Project goals. An approved MP, including public and agency review, would provide a strategic land use document for management and development of all project recreational, natural and cultural resources. The MP is a dynamic document that deals in concepts, not in the specific details of design or administration.

### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The assessment examined 4 alternatives: 1) No Action/No Change Alternative where the current PUP management plan would remain as the primary guidance document; 2) the Preferred Alternative of adopting the proposed MP would provide added detail regarding the comprehensive management for balanced cultural, natural and recreation resources and ensure responsible stewardship and use of Project lands. This alternative would utilize existing land classifications developed during the PUP, with refinements and include analysis of recreation demand, carrying capacity, and cumulative effects required by Corps policy; 3) the Maximize Natural Resource Management/Protection MP Alternative would maximize management/preservation of all natural resources with reduced recreational development and visitor use; and 4) The Maximize Recreation Development MP Alternative which would maximize recreation facilities development and visitor use with reduced natural resources management. Alternatives 3 and 4 were rejected from detailed analysis as they failed to meet the purpose and need.

### 4. PROPOSED ACTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:

With adoption of the Balanced MP Alternative, the MP will supersede the PUP. The proposed MP would directly support Corps responsibilities pursuant to Federal laws to preserve, conserve, restore, maintain, manage, and develop the project lands, waters, and associated resources. The MP would be a dynamic document projecting what would happen over the life of the Project and is flexible based upon changing conditions. The MP would work in combination with supplemental Operational Management Plans to provide long-term comprehensive planning related to decisions on natural and cultural resources as well as public use and presents detailed information to direct day to day implementation of the MP strategies.

The probable consequences (impacts and effects) of the preferred proposed Balanced MP (Alternative 2) on Project recreation, environmental and cultural resources were evaluated. The PUP and MP are conceptual planning documents that do not direct specific action, such as ground disturbing activities that would cause direct impacts to natural and cultural resources but provides guidance for planning future work based on meeting resource objectives.

Under Alternative 2, proposed Balanced MP, routine operation and maintenance activities would have minor or no impacts when using best management practices. Future management changes under the approved MP would improve management programs and process, resulting in beneficial impacts for forest, wildlife, water quality and aesthetics. The Corps also analyzed the effects of the No Action/No Change (Alternative 1) which, short term, were found to be similar to the effects of the Balanced MP. However, the inability to meet new Corps' policy would limit capability to execute program changes and some tasks for improvement of management, resulting in long term adverse impacts.

#### 5. COORDINATION, CONSULTATION, AND REVIEW:

Agency and public involvement supporting the development of the MP has been ongoing since 2008, when public scoping meetings were held during the development of the PUP and deemed sufficient for the MP formulation; therefore, that information was carried forward into the MP.

A thirty-day public scoping process for the proposed MP and associated EA was initiated on 30 July 2014. The Corps sent scoping letters to 89 individuals, businesses, organizations and agencies, encouraging the submission of ideas and comments regarding management of natural, cultural and recreational resources to be included in the proposed MP. Coordination with federal agencies included U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fishery Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. Additional coordination was held with Nez Perce Tribal representatives. Scoping notifications were published in the Clearwater Tribune and the Lewiston Tribune newspapers.

In March of 2015, notification letters for review of the Draft Master Plan, Draft Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) and EA were sent to 115 individuals, businesses, organizations and agencies requesting their review and comments. Letters were also sent to Nez Perce Tribal representatives. Comments received from review of the Draft MP, Draft FONSI and EA, and responses to the comments are attached hereto.

#### 6. COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS:

The Corps sent a letter offering government-to-government consultation to the Nez Perce Tribe in June 2014. The Corps contacted the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and the Nez Perce Tribe in June and July 2014, during the MP scoping process. The Corps did not receive responses to the scoping letters.

The Corps provided the Nez Perce Tribe and the SHPO with the Draft MP and Draft FONSI and EA for review and comment. Nez Perce comments were incorporated in to the Master Plan.

The Corps determined that adoption of the Master Plan has no potential to affect historic properties. In accordance with National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106, and it's implementing regulations, 36 C.F.R. Part 800, the Corps has no further obligation to consult on adoption of the proposed Master Plan. However, any project-specific actions implemented subsequent to adoption of the proposed Master Plan will require a determination of effect, and consultation with State Historic Preservation Officers, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, and interested parties where applicable in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

In 2011, the Corps developed a biological assessment and consulted with NMFS and USFWS on Dworshak Project general land use management program activities.

The BA, called, "Dworshak Natural Resources Land Management Program Activities: Biological Assessment for Threatened and Endangered Species, Critical Habitat, and Essential Fish Habitat. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District, Walla Walla, Washington". The consultation was amended in 2013 by the following: "Dworshak Natural Resources Land Management Program Activities: Amendment to the Biological Assessment for Threatened and Endangered Species, Critical Habitat, and Essential Fish Habitat". August 15, 2013.

As the MP is implemented, any future proposed activities that fall outside of the scope of the referenced BA will be addressed in a supplemental BA and request for informal consultation with USFWS and NMFS or reinitiation of consultation.

7. CONCLUSION/FINDING:

Having reviewed the EA and associated appendices, I find the documents provide sufficient discussions on the purpose and need for the proposed action, alternatives, the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted. I have taken into consideration the technical aspects of the project, best scientific information available and public comments received.

I believe these documents provide sufficient evidence and analysis to meet the Corps' requirements pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and for the Corps to make a finding of no significant impact to the quality of the human environment. I find that implementation of the preferred alternative would not result in significant impacts on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required.

06/05/2015  
Date

  
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Timothy R. Vall  
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Commander