

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
GOODING FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT REHABILITATION
GOODING, IDAHO**

SEPTEMBER 2016

1. INTRODUCTION/PROPOSED ACTION

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District (Corps), proposes to remove the existing channel walls from the Gooding Canal, construct a new channel in the same footprint as the existing channel, and demolish and replace five vehicular bridges and three pedestrian footbridges in the City of Gooding, Idaho (City) on the Little Wood River.

The Little Wood River flows through the City in a constructed masonry channel known as the Gooding Canal. In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration realigned the river and constructed the rectangular channel made of grouted and un-grouted hand-placed lava rock over the native lava rock riverbed. The work was completed in 1941.

Since its completion, the channel has performed well but its walls have deteriorated significantly, and the rate of deterioration is increasing as the project ages. Diminished, but useful functionality of the Gooding Canal has been preserved by the City through ongoing maintenance, targeted repairs, and replacement of channel wall sections. However, the channel, constructed with impermanent methods and dubious materials, is now seventy five years old, and approaching the end of its useful life.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed Project (rehabilitation of the Gooding Canal channel through the City) is to provide localized flood risk management and (if possible) ecosystem restoration through improvement of aquatic habitat and riparian vegetation. The Gooding Canal is comprised of a channel with vertical walls of grouted and un-grouted lava rock for the purposes of flood risk management and irrigation water for the City. Construction of the Gooding Canal altered the natural alignment of the Little Wood River and associated riparian vegetation.

The proposed Project is needed because the channel is failing in areas due to age, original construction methods, channel configuration, and natural forces (ice, freeze/thaw, and heaving) which exert pressure on the individual stones that form the channel walls. In order to continue to provide localized flood risk management, the walls must be rehabilitated or replaced, and obstructions that constrict channel capacity must be removed or redesigned. The existing channel puts public infrastructure, including a school, at risk of damage due to localized flooding. The creation of the

Gooding Canal, including channel realignment, resulted in removal of riparian vegetation and has contributed to poor water quality and negatively impacted aquatic habitat.

The Report/EA, in accordance with Section 3057 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, also determines whether the rehabilitation of the channel is required as a result of improper operation and maintenance by the non-Federal sponsor (the City), and if not, whether rehabilitation of the Gooding Canal and (if possible) ecosystem restoration are feasible. The Report/EA describes measures and alternatives for meeting the Project objectives.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Corps considered four alternatives for addressing the flood management related needs for the City. Each alternative addresses all of the identified needs, but with a different amount of emphasis on the two main themes of providing public access and protecting natural resources. The four alternatives are:

- Alternative 1 [Replace Existing Channel Walls, Modify/Replace Existing Bridges (proposed alternative)]: Alternative 1 meets the four planning criteria and was carried forward for further consideration.
- Alternative 2 (Repair Existing channel Walls, Modify/Replace Existing Bridges): Alternative 2 does not meet the effectiveness or efficiency criteria. Because the existing canal has exceeded its design life, anything short of large scale rehabilitation would induce risk and uncertainty of performance and does not alleviate the problems associated with increased flood risk or increased O&M requirements. This alternative will result in higher future O&M costs than other alternatives, and is not considered a cost effective solution. Alternative 2 – Repair existing channel walls and modify/replace existing bridges was eliminated from further consideration.
- Alternative 3 (Relocation of Existing Structures). Alternative 3 does not meet the efficiency or acceptability criteria. Due to the topography, the majority of the city is in the flood zone. Relocating structures would require moving the majority of the city, creating social and physical upheaval at high cost. Furthermore, the legislation directs the Secretary to redesign the existing wall, presumably using the existing river alignment. Moving the majority of the town does not meet efficiency or acceptability criteria. Alternative 3 was eliminated from further consideration.
- Alternative 4 [No action (no change in current structures or management)]: This represents a continuation of the City's existing management process and level of effort. This alternative focuses on maintenance of existing facilities without addressing the identified risk factors.

Alternative 1 was identified as the preferred alternative. Alternative 4, the No Action Alternative prescribed by the Council of Environmental Quality to serve as the baseline against which all other alternatives are analyzed, was carried forward for detailed

analysis. Alternatives 2 and 3 were rejected from detailed analysis as they fail to meet the purpose and need.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The Proposed Alternative and the No Action Alternative were analyzed for potential effects to the following resources: Topography/Geology/Soils, Climate, Air Quality, Water Quality, Noise, Agriculture/Prime and Unique Farmlands/Land Use, Hydrology, Vegetation, Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Threatened and Endangered Species, Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Transportations, Recreation, and Socioeconomics.

The Corps also considered the cumulative effects of the proposed action along with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the Gooding Flood Control Rehabilitation Project area. The Corps found that none of the listed environmental components would be impacted at a significant level by the proposed project (with the inclusion of appropriate stipulations (see part 5, below). No recently known past, current and/or foreseeable future actions beyond the present study were identified which would result in cumulative impacts at a significant level.

For the proposed Project Clean Water Act compliance Section 404 permit and Section 401 water quality certification, requirements could be met through the use of Nationwide Permit 3 for repair, rehabilitation or replacement of previously authorized structures. For Section 401 water quality certification, the Corps would document the following conditions prior to proceeding with implementation.

- Written notification would be provided to the Southern Region of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.
- Implement activities on impaired waters with a total maximum daily load (TMDL) in a manner that is consistent with the TMDL.
- Design, implement, and maintain best management practices (BMPs) to fully protect and maintain the beneficial uses of Idaho water. Any necessary BMPs would be added to the environmental stipulations (part 5, below).

One noteworthy unavoidable “adverse effect” of the Proposed Alternative is the anticipated adverse impact to historic value of the existing channel. This resource is protected by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Corps and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office continue to work to develop a Memorandum of Agreement to address project impacts to historic properties. Any mitigation measures or requirements agreed to in the MOA will be incorporated into the project environmental stipulations and completed during the design and implementation phase.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL STIPULATIONS

The Corps would adhere to the following environmental stipulations (mitigation) as part of the proposed action in order to ensure that impacts and effects that may result from the action are minimized or eliminated.

- Erosion control measures shall be properly installed and provide adequate coverage for disturbed areas or associated areas subject to runoff as a result of the proposed action.
- Timing of project shall not be adjusted beyond the proposed dates more than two weeks without further environmental compliance review.
- Spreading of excess materials shall be conducted in a manner to eliminate the potential for any of the material to become airborne and enter any fish-bearing water body, or enter any fish-bearing water body by any other means, to include, but not limited to, runoff.
- Reseed or replant disturbed areas, if any, with native materials and seed to minimize the invasion of noxious weed species, and subsequent use of pesticides, as well as potential for runoff.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT/INVOLVEMENT

To announce the start of the feasibility phase and scoping, a public notice was issued to local residents; Federal, State, and local agencies; and other interested parties. A public meeting/workshop was hosted by the City on September 23, 2010. Meeting participants were encouraged to provide input at this workshop. Comments received are documented and attached as Appendix H to the Report/EA.

The Gooding Canal study team consisted of both local and Federal members, and included representatives from the City, Gooding County, Idaho, the Region IV Development Association, and the Corps. Meetings were hosted by the City to facilitate communications between various groups. This involvement led to general support for implementation of the proposed Project.

This study was coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in accordance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as well as with Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). The concerns and views expressed by USFWS and IDFG, encourage the Corps to ensure that the project should be dewatered with appropriate fish salvage to minimize any potential fish kill. Documentation of the coordination is contained in Appendix G of the Report/EA. The draft FONSI and Report/EA were made available to individuals, businesses, organizations and agencies for a 15-day review and comment period from September 7, 2016 to September 21, 2016.

7. COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Section 7.0 of the Report/EA provides a detailed discussion of compliance with other laws and regulations. The proposed action complies with other applicable Federal laws and regulations.

8. CONCLUSION/FINDING

Having reviewed the Report/EA, I find the document provides sufficient discussions on the purpose and need for the proposed action, alternatives, the environmental effects 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. These documents provide sufficient evidence and analysis to meet the District's requirements pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.

Based on this information, I find that implementation of the proposed action would not result in significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required. The District will implement Alternative 1, Replace Existing Channel Walls, Modify/Replace Existing Bridges, at the earliest opportunity, subject to availability of funding.

Damon A. Delarosa
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander

Date