

**EVALUATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICANT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT
IMPACT (FONSI)**

**STAHL H.B. FARMS AND JSH FARMS RIVER PUMPING STATIONS: FISH
SCREENING AND INTAKE MODIFICATIONS PROJECT**

1. BACKGROUND

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District (Corps) proposes to approve requests from Stahl H.B. Farms and JSH Farms to modify and extend their existing river pumping station intakes and fish screening facilities located along the Columbia River at river mile 301.6. Sediments are accumulating in front of and underneath the Stahl H.B. Farms pumping station, restricting flows and causing damage to the Stahl H.B. Farms intake pumps and threatening to damage the JSH Farms intake pumps. In response to their requests, the Corps would issue a new easement to Stahl H.B. Farms and would amend the existing easement with JSH Farms.

Applicant Prepared EA. In accordance with 40 C.F.R. 1506.5(b), the District is authorized to permit applicants to prepare an environmental assessment, as long as the agency performs its own evaluation of the environmental issues and makes its own findings on potential impacts. Stahl H.B. Farms and JSH Farms have submitted the *STAHL H.B. FARMS AND JSH FARMS RIVER PUMPING STATIONS: FISH SCREENING AND INTAKE MODIFICATIONS PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT* prepared by Pacific Habitat Services. The District's role in the preparation of the EA was limited to an independent review and comment on the draft document. The District has also reviewed the final EA and determined that the information contained therein is accurate and satisfies the requirements of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations, and the USACE's specific NEPA regulations, except as supplemented or explained below. The EA is, therefore, incorporated (in its entirety) herein by reference and made a part hereof.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed project is to modify the existing intake and fish screening facilities at the Stahl H.B. Farms and JSH Farms pumping stations to reduce or avoid ongoing sedimentation problems, maintain the uninterrupted flow of current irrigation water right volume, reduce the need for maintenance dredging, and meet current National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) fish passage and intake screening criteria, therefore minimizing impacts to juvenile salmonids during pumping operations.

3. PROJECT ALTERNATIVES AND PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The following alternatives were identified and evaluated for the Stahl H.B. Farms and JSH Farms River Pumping Stations Fish Screening and Intake Modification Project.

Alternative 1 - No Action': With this alternative, no modifications to the Stahl H.B. Farms or JSH Farms pumping stations would take place. The pump intakes would continue to be operated in their current state. Sandy sediments would continue to accumulate in front of the Stahl H.B. Farms pumping station resulting in restricted flows and continued damage to the Stahl H.B. Farms intake pumps, and potential damage to the JSH Farms intake pumps.

Alternative 2 – Routine Maintenance Dredging: Includes routine maintenance dredging of the accumulated sediments in front of and under the Stahl H.B. Farms pumping station in order to maintain pumping operations. Accumulated sediments would be removed using a Mud Cat MC-915 or similar model suction dredge operating from a floating barge. The resulting dredge material would be returned back into the river channel, approximately 300 feet north of the pumping station. The dredge material would be carried from the suction dredge through a pipe that would discharge into the river at a depth of approximately 40 feet, thereby allowing sediments to be redistributed downstream.

Alternative 3 – Installation of Extended Intake Pipes and Replacement Fish Screens: Modifies the existing intake/fish screening facilities and moves them out into deeper water to avoid routine maintenance dredging at the Stahl H.B. Farms intake location and to meet NMFS fish passage and screening criteria. Proposed intake modifications would include (1) replacing the existing cylindrical screens with enclosed cans; (2) connecting each can to a common manifold placed along the front of each of the existing pumps stations; (3) extending a new 72-inch diameter intake pipe at Stahl H.B. Farms and a new 60-inch diameter intake pipe at JSH Farms approximately 180 feet into the Columbia River from the existing pump stations; and (4) installing new tee screens at the end of each of the new intake pipes. Dredging would be done the same as for Alternative 2.

Alternative 4 – Installation of Flat Screens at the Pumping Stations: Installs flat travelling screens or flat screens with travelling brushes at the existing pumping stations to meet the approach velocity and opening size criteria for NMFS, and to handle floating debris. Such screens, however, would be at or near the shoreline where migratory fry would be moving and would typically require regular removal of accumulated sediments (dredging).

5. The preferred alternative selected for the Stahl H.B. Farms and JSH Farms River Pumping Stations Fish Screening and Intake Modification Project was Alternative 3, Installation of Extended Intake Pipes and Replacement Fish Screens.

Alternative 3 was chosen because it would avoid the sedimentation and debris accumulation problem and would upgrade the intake screens and pumps to meet NMFS' current fish passage and screening criteria, therefore avoiding entrainment or impingement of juvenile salmonids during pumping operations. Further, deeper depth location of the intakes should minimize potential impacts to migrating juvenile salmonids, because of their habitat preference for depths less than 20 feet. Alternative 3 would also provide the most improvement to the existing intakes and would avoid routine maintenance dredging.

4. COORDINATION

The project has been coordinated with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Walla Walla and Portland Districts), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Oregon Department of State Lands. Each identified agency/group was contacted and provided project information. A notice of completion of a project EA and signing of the project FONSI was placed in local newspapers.

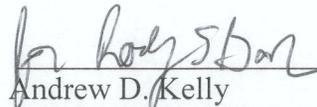
5. CONCLUSION/FINDINGS

Having reviewed the EA, I find that it provides sufficient discussions on the need for the proposal, alternatives to the proposal, the environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted. Further, after an independent review of the EA, the District believes it to provide both sufficient evidence and analysis to meet its requirements pursuant to NEPA and for the District to make a finding of no significant impact to the quality of the human environment.

I have taken into consideration the technical aspects of the project, best scientific information available, and the information contained in the EA. Based on this information, I have determined that the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, and that an environmental impact statement is not required.

29 Jan 13

Date:



Andrew D. Kelly
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander