

**DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
SWALLOWS BEACH RESTORATION
CLARKSTON, WASHINGTON
NOVEMBER 2016**

1. INTRODUCTION/PROPOSED ACTION

The Walla Walla District of the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) proposes actions to improve water access recreation and public health and safety at Swallows Park in Clarkston, Washington. The facilities at Swallows Park are part of the Lower Granite Lock and Dam Project. Safe beach access at Swallows Park has not been possible for many years due to shallow waters resulting from sedimentation and degraded water quality, nutrient load, and eutrophic conditions including caused by high densities of Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) and other birds at the location. The proposed action would create a safe beach access area downstream from the current location, remove a public safety hazard by filling the existing shallow pool, and restore native vegetation to the area.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to restore a safe swimming area and access to the Snake River, and address public health/safety concerns on Corps managed federal lands at Swallows Park in Clarkston, Washington, in accordance with the Corps public recreation mission. The proposed action is needed because ongoing sedimentation has reduced the existing swimming area depth from over nine feet (in the mid-1970s) to approximately one foot during recent summer recreation seasons. Increasing use of the now shallow pool by Canada geese has resulted in potentially unsafe conditions for the public due to likely high fecal coliform bacteria counts. The existing beach access has not been usable by the public for water based recreation since approximately 2000 due to the shallow water conditions and the likely hazards to public health and safety..

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternatives for this EA were developed by evaluating combinations of possible activities developed during internal Corps scoping meetings, consideration of actions identified by the local Swallows Beach Tack Force in the late 1990s, local conditions, and applicable environmental laws and regulations. The activities and actions were combined into alternatives based on logistical efficiencies, as well as meeting the intensive recreational use mission for the land use allocation.

The following five alternatives have been identified for the Project:

- **Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative):** Current management actions would continue at Swallows Park. The existing shallow pool would remain, and there would be no open public beach access.

- **Alternative 2 (Dredge Alternative):** This alternative would use dredging equipment to remove accumulated sediment from the shallow pool and restore the original design to the beach access area for safe public use.
- **Alternative 3 (New Beach Alternative):** This alternative would create a new beach access at the downstream (north) end of the existing offshore island. The existing shallow pool would remain.
- **Alternative 4 (Pool Fill Alternative):** This alternative would fill the existing shallow pool. This action would remove the public health and safety hazards associated with the existing shallow pool, but would not provide a new beach access.
- **Alternative 5 (Combined-Alternatives 3 and 4 Proposed Action):** This alternative, the preferred alternative, would create a new beach access at the downstream (north) end of the existing offshore island and would fill the existing shallow pool.

Alternative 1, 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, 3, and 4 were rejected from detailed analysis as they failed to meet the screening criteria related to the Project Purpose and Need and other operational needs. Alternative 5 best meets Purpose and Need and the screening criteria and was carried forward as the Preferred Alternative for detailed analysis.

4. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Preferred Action, Alternative 5, would create a new beach access area for safe public use on the downstream end of the existing offshore island and fill the existing shallow pool to remove the public health and safety hazards associated with it. Work would be accomplished during low water periods by Corps Clarkston Natural Resource Management Office personnel using heavy equipment such as skidsteers, excavators, or similar equipment. Staging areas would be located as close as possible to the work site and would be situated above the ordinary high water mark. It is estimated that work would take up to five years to complete. The specific actions to be accomplished in Alternative 5 are:

- During low water, fill would be placed with heavy equipment at the north end of the existing shallow pool. This fill would create a berm to prevent water flow across the new beach site during possible high river levels.
- Approximately 6200 cubic yards of sand fill would be placed with heavy equipment north of the berm between north end of the offshore island and the existing shore to create the new beach. The beach would be contoured from the berm to approximately the 740 foot elevation at the water's edge.
- The existing pool would be filled with heavy equipment to approximately the same height as the berm, moving from north to south as fill material becomes available.

- Native vegetation would be planted over the fill. Plantings may include grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees.
- Recreational trails with benches and interpretive signs may be established on the existing island.
- Aquatic habitat mitigation actions would be implemented to compensate for impacted areas as described in the mitigation plan being developed.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Alternative 5 and the No Action Alternative were analyzed for potential effects to the following resources: Soils, Aquatic Habitats, Vegetation, Wildlife, Fisheries, Threatened and Endangered Species, Cultural Resources, Recreation, and Climate Change. Pertinent conservation measures, both impact minimization measures (IMMs) and best management practices (BMPs), would be fully implemented to minimize environmental impacts.

The Corps also considered the cumulative effects of the proposed action along with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the Swallows Park area. The Corps analyzed the cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on Aquatic Habitats and Recreation because these resources were determined to be notable for their importance to the area and their potential for cumulative impacts.

Environmental analysis and effects of Alternative 5 and the No Action Alternative, including cumulative effects, are detailed in Section 3 of the EA. The analysis concluded there may be some short-term detrimental impacts to some resources (Aquatic Habitats, Vegetation, Fisheries) from Alternative 5, but overall long-term effects on all analyzed resources would be insignificant or beneficial. Compensatory mitigation would be implemented based on project impacts to some aquatic habitats. The potential effects of the proposed action, when combined with the effects of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, is not expected to result in significant effects to the resources identified above.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT/INVOLVEMENT

The Corps has worked with a number of local individuals, public officials, and interest groups since 1997 to address the health and safety concerns related to the existing beach at Swallows Park, as well as the need to provide safe public beach access. The Corps hosted several meetings of a task force during the late 1990s to obtain public input to help develop a solution.

The EA and draft FONSI were made available to individuals, businesses, organizations and agencies for a 30-day review and comment period from November 15 to December 15, 2016. The District received XX comment documents from interested members of the public.

6. COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

See Section 4.0 of the EA for a discussion of compliance with other laws and regulations. The proposed action complies with other federal laws and applicable regulations.

The District has sent copies of the Biological Assessment to the USFWS and NMFS on September 19, 2016 for their review and concurrence with ESA. The Corps received concurrence from the USFWS on XX and NMFS on XX.

An evaluation of the aquatic habitats under the federal Clean Water Act, Section 404(b)(1) has been conducted and a least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (Alternative 5) has been identified. A compensatory mitigation plan is being developed to compensate for aquatic resources that would be impacted by the proposed action.

Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act requires that any federal activity that may result in a discharge to waters of the United States must first receive a water quality certification from the state in which the activity will occur. A request for 401 certification through the Washington State Department of Ecology was made November 15, 2016 and the Corps received certification XXXX XX, 2017.

7. CONCLUSION/FINDING

Having reviewed the Swallows Beach Restoration EA, I find the document provides 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. These documents provide sufficient evidence and analysis to meet the District's requirements pursuant to the National Environmental Policy. 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 5 (Combined-Preferred Alternative) at the earliest opportunity, subject to availability of funding and competing Project priorities.

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

Date