

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

EMMETT LEVEE REPAIR

1. BACKGROUND

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District (Corps) proposes to repair a section of the Emmett Levee on the Payette River near Emmett, Idaho. The Emmett Levee is located in rural Gem County, Idaho, and was damaged by high flows in April 2012. The Emmett Levee is a non-Federal levee that was first inspected for Federal eligibility in September 1989. The levee is composed of dredged material, and protected by revetment. The last eligibility inspection of the Emmett Levee was completed in 2009. The Corps is proposing to repair the levee under the authority of Public Law (PL) 84-99 which allows the Corps the authority to undertake activities; including rehabilitation of flood control works (FCW) threatened or destroyed by flood. On 30 April 2012 the City of Emmett requested assistance from the Corps to repair the damaged levee. This project is in response to that request.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to restore flood risk protection provided by the Emmett levee system on the Payette River near Emmett, Idaho by repairing a damaged section of the levee. The Emmett Levee is approximately 3,500 feet long, and is located on the south bank of the Payette River adjacent to the town of Emmett, Idaho. The levee provides 50-year level flood protection to 106 acres of land with 209 residential, commercial, and light industrial structures south of the Payette River. Total value of structures protected by the levee is \$37 million. The Emmett Levee repair consists of a 150 foot section of levee on the south bank of the Payette River just downstream from North Washington Avenue. Without repair, this levee will continue to erode and may eventually fail, leading to the loss of private property and public infrastructure.

3. PROJECT ALTERNATIVES AND PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Environmental Assessment (EA) considered two alternatives, No Action, and Levee Repair. The Corps identified Levee Repair as the preferred alternative and proposed action. Under this alternative the Corps would repair one section of the Emmett Levee during the spring of 2013, prior to high water flows. Repair work would require excavation and removal of the material within the damaged area. Satisfactory material taken from the damaged area would be placed on the landside of the levee. Unsatisfactory material would be disposed of off-site. A toe trench with riprap would be constructed at the channel bottom. This toe trench would serve as a

foundation for the new riprap on the levee slope. New sand and gravel would be placed as fill material for the damaged area. Fill material would be compacted and shaped to a 2 to 1 slope. Riprap would be placed on top as the final revetment surface. No attempt would be made to dewater the project site prior to repair work as reasonable efforts to dewater the project area would create greater sediment disturbance and transport. Work is expected to take approximately one week.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The proposed levee rehab would have less than significant effects to several resource areas including water quality, aquatic resources, wildlife, soils, and vegetation. Effects to water quality would include increased sediment transport and increased turbidity at the repair site and for a limited distance downstream. These effects would be localized and short term. To minimize sediment transport and increased turbidity, work would be conducted prior to high flows. Minor disturbance to fish and aquatic organisms may occur at the levee repair site, while additional disturbance may occur downstream due to sediment transport and increased turbidity. Some aquatic invertebrates would be lost during excavation, but this loss would be minor relative to the extensive populations of the river system. Clearing and grubbing would remove limited shrub habitat and may impact small birds and mammals in the area.

There may be some loss of small mammals during excavation. Larger, more mobile, species would relocate to nearby habitats. Construction is scheduled to be conducted prior to nesting seasons for migratory birds and would not impact these species. Effects to soil would include the excavation of an already disturbed levee site and soil loss through increased sediment movement. However, these effects would be short-term and would be reversed when levee repairs were completed. Approximately 0.1 of an acre of levee would be cleared of a sparse layer of shrubs and grass. No trees would be cleared. The loss of vegetation would be minor relative to extensive shrub and grass habitats in the area.

The Corps selected the Levee Repair alternative because it would meet the purpose and need of the project and would have only minor environmental effects.

The Corps coordinated this project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Gem County, and the City of Emmett.

The Corps determined this project would have “no effect” on species listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Corps has determined that the preferred action would not adversely affect historic properties. A letter requesting concurrence was sent to the Idaho SHPO on February 20, 2013. The Corps received concurrence from the Idaho SHPO on March 6, 2013. The project does not require a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit as it is exempt under 33 CFR

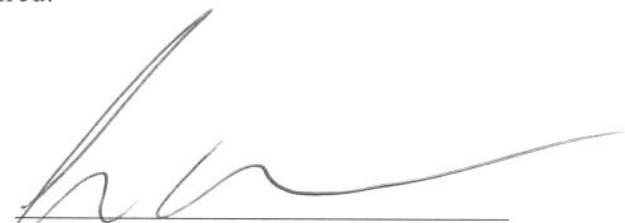
323.4 November 13, 1986, as amended August 25, 1993. The Project is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

The Corps distributed the EA and draft FONSI on March 6, 2013 for a 15 day public comment period. No comments were received.

5. CONCLUSION

In view of the information provided by the EA, public and agency review, and coordination with Federal, State and local agencies, I find that approving the repair of the Emmett Levee would not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human and natural environment. Consequently, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Date: 3/25/2013



Andrew D. Kelly
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District Commander