



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Walla Walla District

MILL CREEK PROJECT OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

MILL CREEK • WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mill Creek Project is located about 2 miles east of Walla Walla in Southeastern Washington. It was authorized under the Flood Control Act of 1938 and operational by 1942.

The primary purpose of the Mill Creek Project is to reduce the risk of flooding to the City of Walla Walla and adjacent downstream areas bordering Mill Creek, Yellowhawk Creek and Garrison Creek. Recreation was added as an authorized project purpose in 1944.

The Project consists of a diversion dam that can route floodwater to a storage reservoir (Bennington Lake) and a division works structure that controls flows into Yellowhawk and Garrison Creeks. The Corps also operates and maintains about 1-mile of the associated Mill Creek Levee System, from the diversion dam to the Project Office parking lot. Walla Walla County's Mill Creek Flood Control Zone District manages the approximately 7 miles of the levee system downstream of the Mill Creek Project boundary.



Mill Creek Project requires continuous operation and maintenance (O&M) to effectively manage the risk of potential flood damages during seasonal high flows. During the decades since project construction, O&M activities have been updated as technologies improved and new environmental regulations were enacted.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was originally prepared for the Mill Creek Project in 1975 for the O&M occurring at the time. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) plans to supplement that original 1975 analysis of operations and maintenance. A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is prepared after an EIS has been published and there are modifications to the federal action, or significant time has passed since the EIS was completed to account for changes in the action or surrounding environment.

In addition, Columbia Basin bull trout and mid-Columbia River steelhead were listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and critical habitat has been designated in Mill Creek. The Mill Creek Project's 1975 EIS does not address potential effects to ESA-listed fish impacts from O&M and flood operations.



The Corps is proposing to prepare a SEIS in order to address and analyze both the current O&M activities of the Mill Creek Project, and proposed changes to O&M. This SEIS effort is not intended to address all of the fish-passage issues present within the entire Mill Creek Flood Control Project through Walla Walla. It is also not intended to be the final NEPA document needed for all future potential changes to the Mill Creek Project.

An important decision to be informed by this SEIS is how to conduct O&M in a manner that balances the risk of flood damages with potential effects to ESA-listed fish.

What is an EIS? An EIS is a document that describes the positive and negative effects on the environment that could result from a proposed action. Alternatives to the proposed action and their effects are also presented.

An EIS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for actions that could significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

The purpose of an EIS is to promote informed decision making by federal agencies by presenting information concerning environmental impacts to agencies and the public.

Scoping is used early in the EIS process to gather pertinent information and identify issues that should be included in the EIS. The Corps seeks input and written comments from federal, state, tribal, and local agencies as well as individuals and organizations who may be interested in, or affected by the proposed action. To assist in identifying and considering issues and concerns related to the proposed action, comments for scoping should be as specific as possible. Scoping comments will be used in: 1) identifying potential issues, 2) identifying key issues, 3) narrowing the potential issues, 4) exploring alternatives; and 5) identifying potential environmental and social effects of the proposed action.

A draft EIS is prepared with a full description of the affected environment and consequences as well as reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. Agencies and the public have the opportunity to review and provide comments.

Any public and agency comments on the draft EIS are considered and a final EIS is prepared.

After the final EIS is completed and any remaining comments are addressed, the federal agency makes a final decision on the proposed action. A Record of Decision is prepared. This completes the NEPA process.



How Will the Public be Involved?

Public input is critical throughout the SEIS process. The first opportunity for public involvement is during the scoping process, scheduled for May 11 through June 12, 2017. Currently, the Corps is seeking public input to help determine the scope and issues to analyze in this SEIS. An open-house-styled public scoping meeting is scheduled for May 24, from 4-7 p.m., in the Walla Walla Regional Airport Community Meeting Room, located at 45 Terminal Loop Road in Walla Walla.

We want to know your thoughts and ideas about the project's operations and maintenance activities. Public input will be sought through these means: written comments via online comment forms, U.S. Postal Service or email; and during an open house event.

We encourage you to attend the May 24 public scoping meeting and invite you to visit our webpage <http://www.nww.usace.army.mil/MillCreekSEIS/> for the latest information and reference documents.

To submit comments and/or be added to an email list to receive updates and notifications, please visit the webpage or contact the environmental compliance coordinator at NEPANWW@usace.army.mil.