



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
Walla Walla District

**Boise River at Eagle Island Environmental Restoration Project
Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986
Ada County, Idaho**

**National Environmental Policy Act
Public Scoping Comments Summary**



March 2011

Introduction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Boise River Flood Control District #10 (BRFCD10) are working as partners in a project to evaluate potential environmental restoration alternatives for the Boise River at the head of Eagle Island (river mile 45). This document summarizes public comment received during National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping conducted from November 19, 2010 through December 20, 2010. The objective of the scoping was to identify issues and concerns to be addressed in a Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment.

Background

On November 19, 2010, the Corps sent a letter to more than 180 agencies, organizations, local governments and individuals requesting feedback about issues and concerns to be addressed in the study (attachment A). A total of 16 comments were received during the 30-day scoping period from the entities listed in table 1 below. Written comments were received through the U.S. Postal Service and by electronic mail.

Table 1. Groups Providing NEPA Scoping Comments

| Group | Represented | Percent of Total |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Federal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Land Management • Environmental Protection Agency • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers | 18.8 |
| State | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ada Soil and Water Conservation District • Idaho Department of Environmental Quality • Idaho Department of Fish and Game (two comments received) • Idaho Department of Water Resources | 31.2 |
| Local governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ada City-County Emergency Management • City of Boise | 12.5 |
| Non-governmental organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audubon Society • Idaho Conservation League • Idaho Rivers United • Land Trust of Treasure Valley • Trout Unlimited | 31.2 |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballentyne Irrigation Ditch Company | 6.3 |

Written Comment Summary

All comments were reviewed and processed. Comments were organized by category and are summarized below.

WATER RESOURCES PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

- Project is located downstream of major municipal and stormwater discharges which are associated with water quality contamination.
- The natural hydrologic regime has been altered, eliminating spring and winter freshets. There are abrupt flow fluctuations. Impacts should be described and options to eliminate or reduce or mitigate considered.
- Current regulations allow some water right holders to alter the stream channel without permit or regulation. Consider options to reduce, eliminate or mitigate these effects.
- September and October flows in the North Channel are below normal, making irrigation diversions difficult.
- There are other restoration issues on the Boise River that also need to be addressed.
- The New Dry Creek Diversion Dam, located upstream of the head of Eagle Island, has increased overbank flooding on south bank and diverts more than 50 percent of winter flow.
- BRFC10 projects have impacted resources and should be described and mitigated.

STUDY / PLANNING PROCESS

- Consider a full range of alternatives, including those that may be outside the authority of the Corps.
- Identify a reasonable range of alternatives.
- List impacts and mitigation measures for each alternative.
- Embrace strategies that can be implemented quicker at less cost, instead of large scale restoration.
- Identify and describe all waters within the planning area and reduce or mitigate for impacts to those waters.
- Project scope should consider ecosystem restoration at the larger watershed scale, not a single reach.
- Use the Bonneville Environmental Foundations' model watershed restoration approach.
- Consider project's impacts on ecological characteristics of the river.
- Identify environmental success criteria that are achievable and measurable.

RECREATION ISSUES

- Evaluate impact of all alternatives on recreational activities.
- Maintain and improve game populations for hunting, fishing and trapping.
- Increase opportunities for wildlife viewing.
- Increase variety and distribution of access to private lands for fish and wildlife related recreation.
- Promote sustainable recreational opportunities that are consistent with restoration goals.
- Evaluate how project might affect Idaho Department of Fish and Game fish and wildlife related recreational goals and objectives.

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT/RESTORATION

- Formulate alternatives that would allow the river to more readily access portions of the floodplain and allow for natural river configurations.
- To what extent can natural floodplain functions be restored?
- Reconnect old river side channels.
- Evaluate the cessation of agriculture activities in the floodplain.
- Remove or modify dikes and levees.
- To help prevent pit capture, fill gravel pits with excess materials rather than store that material in the floodplain.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

- Increase the capacity of habitat to support fish and wildlife.
- Ensure the long-term survival of native fish, wildlife and plants.
- Consider placement of fish screens at diversions.
- Provide measures that would improve aquatic insect habitat.
- Allow for some down trees to remain in the river or add woody debris to provide fish habitat.
- Identify short and long-term effects to fish and wildlife.
- Evaluate how the project might affect Idaho Department of Fish and Game fish and wildlife management goals and objectives.
- Create interconnecting side channels to address flow fluctuations and to create off-channel habitat.

VEGETATION

- Mimic natural hydrograph to allow for black cottonwood forest regeneration.
- Consider cessation of agricultural activities to restore diverse and native vegetative communities.
- Reestablish cottonwood and willow communities.
- Provide appropriate/necessary hydric conditions for black cottonwood regeneration.
- Ensure a healthy riparian zone.
- Protect and restore native forested wetlands.
- Remove exotic and invasive plant species.
- Provide measures that would improve riparian function (shade and litter).

WATER QUALITY

- Provide measures that would help with poor water quality.
- Shifts in flows from the South Channel to North Channel will impact operation of the West Boise wastewater treatment plant, located on the south channel.
- Reduce the inflow of nutrients and sediments into the Boise River through treatment of stormwater, irrigation return flow and wastewater.
- Identify the water bodies that are potentially affected and specific pollutants.
- Provide measures that would reduce fine sediment.
- Obtain National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for potential discharges into the waters of the United States.
- Consider passive treatment of stormwater, irrigation return flows and wastewater.
- Define existing water quality restoration and enhancement efforts and explain how this project will coordinate with those efforts.
- Identify water quality mitigation for discharge to the Boise River during construction.

HYDROLOGY AND HYDRAULICS

- Will restoring the natural floodplain function reduce flooding and how will this be measured?
- Consider reintroducing regular bank full and out-of-bank flows.
- Consider natural channel migration in a large gravel-bed river.
- Old irrigation canals paralleling the South Channel downstream of the head of Eagle Island help control flooding at flows over 3,000 cubic feet per second.

- Project should consider options to create a more natural flow regime.
- Consider replacing/modifying the Dry Creek Diversion Dam with a low maintenance type structure to maintain downstream flows in winter months.

COORDINATION WITH AGENCIES, PUBLIC, TRIBES, AND OTHERS

- Involve local elected officials, floodplain managers and emergency staff in the development of alternatives.
- Involve locals in riparian plant selection.
- Contact Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to obtain information about source water in the area and address issues as needed.
- How will private lands be treated?

POST-CONSTRUCTION ISSUES

- Ensure long-term maintenance.
- Who will manage the project once construction has been completed?
- The project budget should include funding for monitoring and adaptive management for 5-10 years.

OTHER

- Proactive approach may be needed to meet citizens' vision of a natural system with habitat, recreation and open space on Boise River.
- Take a watershed "river management" approach to the problem and do not use traditional river engineering practices that may damage ecosystem health.
- Purchase property or protective easements.
- Reclaim gravel pits.
- Consider modification of upstream irrigation diversion to improve channel stability and fish passage.
- Determine who is buying the required land necessary for restoration activities and treatment of private lands.

Attachment A: Scoping Letter and Fact Sheet



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WALLA WALLA DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
BOISE OUTREACH OFFICE, 720 PARK BOULEVARD, SUITE 255
BOISE, IDAHO 83712

November 19, 2010

Reply to
Attention of:

Planning, Programs and Project
Management Division

Dear Interested Party:

The Walla Walla District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), in cooperation with the Boise River Flood Control District No. 10 (Project Sponsor), requests your input to help identify issues and concerns to be addressed in a Feasibility Report (FR) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Boise River at Eagle Island Ecosystem Restoration Project. The objective of the study is to assess the feasibility of ecosystem restoration along the Boise River at and near the head of Eagle Island (River Mile 45) located near the City of Eagle in Ada County, Idaho. The FR and EA will document the study results and evaluate the effects of alternative plans. The study process and documents will be prepared to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable environmental laws and regulations. This project has been initiated under the authority of Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, which allows the Corps to work with non-Federal sponsors to restore a degraded ecosystem.

The goal of the proposed project is to preserve, restore, or improve the biological (aquatic and riparian communities) and physical (floodplain functions, sediment transport, and channel hydraulics) components at and near the head of Eagle Island to a more naturally functioning and self-sustaining condition. The study area includes the Boise River and adjacent lands between the Glenwood Street Bridge and the Eagle Road Bridge. However, restoration alternatives are focused on the reach containing the head of Eagle Island downstream on the North and South Channels, to approximately the west end of the gravel ponds on the island. The enclosed fact sheet shows the project location and provides additional information

The Corps is initiating NEPA scoping and invites all interested Federal, state and local agencies; Tribes; and the public to provide input on issues to address in the FR and EA. Additional project information, including dates and times of future public meetings and the draft FR and the EA, will be posted on the Corps website as the information becomes available (<http://www.nww.usace.army.mil>).

Please submit your comments on the project by December 20, 2010. Written comments can be emailed to the Corps at Boise.Office@usace.army.mil or mailed to Boise Outreach Office, 720 Park Blvd., Suite 255, Boise, Idaho 83712. If you would like to remain on the project contact list, please complete the enclosed form and return to the address listed above or provide the information by email. For more information on the project, please contact Ellen Berggren, Project Manager, at 208-345-2065 or visit the Corps website.

Sincerely,

ACTING
FOR

Gregory S. Graham
Chief, Planning Branch



Boise River at Eagle Island Ecosystem Restoration Project

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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BACKGROUND: The Boise River at Eagle Island Ecosystem Restoration Project is located approximately 15 miles downstream of Lucky Peak Dam where the lower Boise River splits into North and South Channels creating Eagle Island (Figure 1). The project area is located within the floodplain of the Boise River, near the cities of Eagle, Garden City, and Boise, in Ada County, Idaho. The project is focused from the head of Eagle Island, downstream along both the North and South Channels, to approximately the west end of the existing gravel ponds.

The objective of the proposed project is to restore the biological (aquatic and riparian communities) and physical (floodplain functions, sediment transport, and channel hydraulics) components, at and near the head of Eagle Island, to a more naturally functioning and self-sustaining state. This area has been affected by flow regulation, irrigation diversion, flood control projects, gravel mining, and land development encroachment from the 1950s to the present day. The project would also accommodate short and long-term goals and priorities to improve floodplain functions.

SPONSOR: The Boise River Flood Control District #10 (FCD10) is the non-federal sponsor.

STUDY AUTHORITIES: The Corps is conducting the study in accordance with Section 1135 of the Water Resource Development Act of 1986, which authorizes the Corps to modify existing Corps projects to restore the environment or construct new projects to restore areas where Corps projects have contributed to degradation of environmental quality.

STUDY OVERVIEW: The Corps originally initiated the study in 2002. During the 2002 to 2004 time frame, the Corps, working with local stakeholders and the FCD10, conducted baseline studies, including hydraulic studies, and began to identify management measures and alternative plans to address identified water resource problems and planning objectives. Study activities were suspended in February 2005, due to a Corps program funding shortage. The Corps recently received Federal funding to complete the study. Problems initially identified include:

- Riparian and wetland habitat have declined in the lower Boise River as a result of fluctuating water levels from upstream project operations along with continued industrial, commercial and residential development pressures.
- Gravel extraction ponds adjacent to the river channels and the overburden berms formed around these ponds contribute to the fragmentation of the floodplain ecosystem, resulting in decreased floodplain function and loss of natural habitat. These ponds are susceptible to pit capture, which can initiate river channel instability, including bank erosion and in-channel head-cuts.
- Change in geomorphology at the head of the island has caused varying flow distribution between the North and South Channels, resulting in river bank instability and increased flood risk in the South Channel and on Eagle Island. The variable nature of the flow split could mean homes are at flood risk.
- Changes in Boise River channel morphology and varying flow characteristics have resulted in the buildup of gravel at the head of Eagle Island. Heavy equipment has entered the river channel to create push-up dams or to remove the gravel to meet downstream water rights. These maintenance activities result in ecological impacts to the river and adjacent riparian areas.

The Corps and FCD10 are currently conducting a feasibility study to identify alternatives, evaluate the effects of the alternatives, and eventually identify an alternative to address the water resources problems identified.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact Ellen Berggren, Project Manager, with questions about the study or visit the Corps website at www.nww.usace.army.mil.

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – WALLA WALLA DISTRICT – BOISE OUTREACH OFFICE

720 Park Boulevard, Suite 255; Boise, ID 83712

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November 2010

General Area

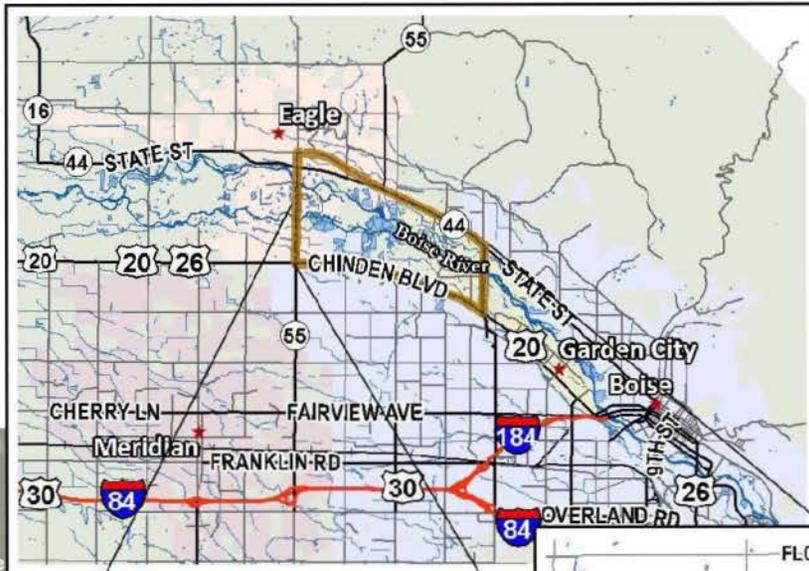
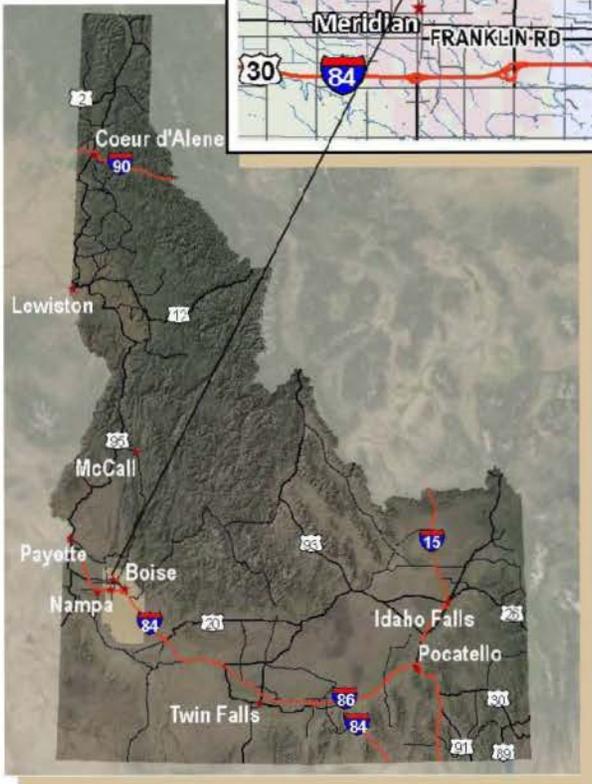
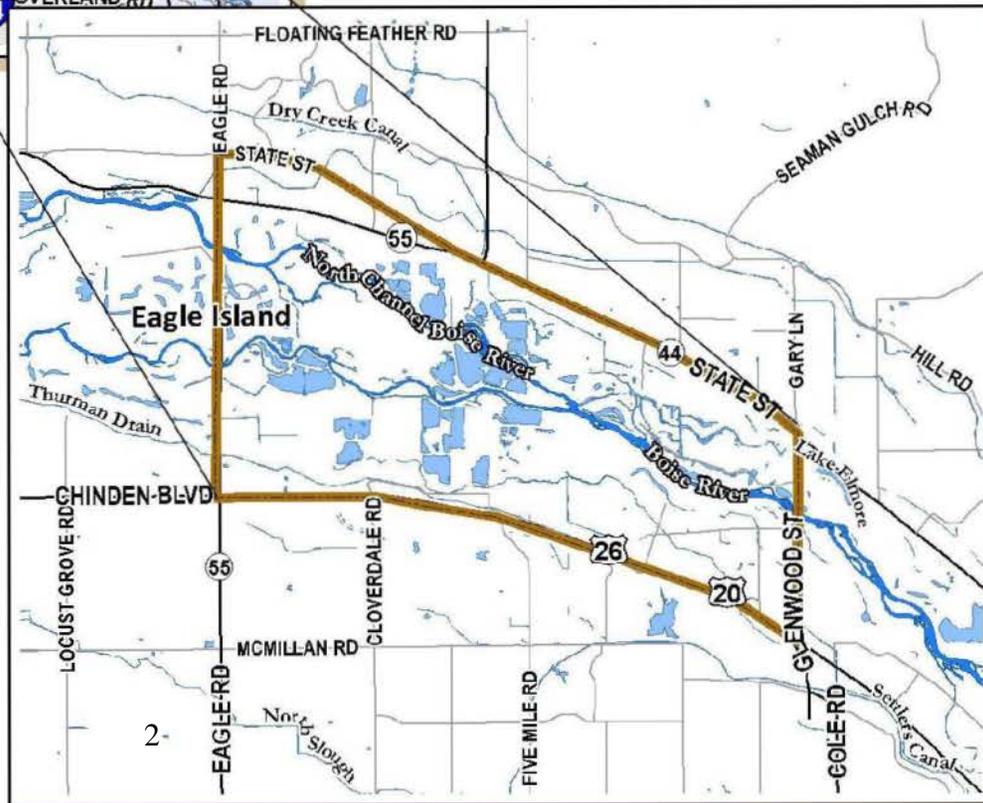


Figure 1. Project Location

Project Vicinity





Boise River at Eagle Island Ecosystem Restoration Project

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•Please add my name to the Boise River at Eagle Island Ecosystem Restoration Project contact list so that I may receive future project updates and notices.

Name

Organization

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Email address

Preference for contact (please check one): ___email or ___ mail

Please return to:

Ellen Berggren
Project Manager
Army Corps of Engineers
Boise Outreach Office
720 Park Boulevard, Suite 255
Boise, Idaho 83712