

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
YAKIMA RIVER DELTA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION
FEASIBILITY REPORT WITH INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Richland, Washington
September 2024

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District (USACE), has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. The final Feasibility Report with Integrated Environmental Assessment (FR/EA) dated September 2024, for the *Yakima River Delta Ecosystem Restoration Project* addresses the feasibility of restoring the structure, functions, and processes of migration corridors for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed fish within the Yakima River Delta in Richland Washington.

The final FR/EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated alternatives for the modification of the Yakima Delta within the McNary Lock and Dam Project reservoir (Lake Wallula). The causeway creates a stagnant water environment within the backwater of the Yakima River Delta and partially blocks and delays passage for ESA-listed fish. The Recommended Plan is full removal of the existing causeway between the mainland and Bateman Island without supplemental riparian habitat restoration and includes:

- Removal of the existing causeway, including excavating 39,870 cubic yards of fill material to restore the Yakima River to free flowing along the southern side of Bateman Island. An additional 149 cubic yards of rock and related materials necessary to stabilize the exposed shoreline where the causeway currently meets the island and main shore.
- Implementation of the associated Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan (MAMP). Monitoring would continue until the project is determined to be successful based on the identified criteria within the FR/EA MAMP included in Appendix G, but no more than 10 years.

The USACE planning process was used to develop a final array of three alternatives (including the No Action Alternative). The two action alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3) would fully breach the causeway with or without additional riparian habitat restoration, as follows:

- The No Action Alternative.
- Alternative 2a, Full Removal of Causeway with Riparian Habitat.
- Alternative 3a, Full Removal of Causeway without Riparian Habitat.

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the Recommended Plan are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

	Insignificant effects	Less than significant effects as a result of mitigation	Resource unaffected by action
Sediments	X	-	-
Noise	X	-	-
Air Quality	X	-	-
Geology	-	-	X
Hydrology	X	-	-
Water Quality	X	-	-
Aquatic Resources	X	-	-
Threatened and Endangered Species	X	-	-
Wetlands	X	-	-
Wildlife	X	-	-
Vegetation	X	-	-
Land Use	X	-	-
Recreation	X	-	-
Floodplain	-	-	X
Aesthetics/Visual Resources	X	-	-
Climate Change	X	-	-
Cultural and Historic Resources	X	-	-
Socioeconomics/Environmental Justice	X	-	-
Public Infrastructure	X	-	-
Public Utilities	-	-	X
Hazardous, Toxic and Radioactive Waste	X	-	-
Cumulative Effects	X	-	-

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the Recommended Plan. Impact minimization measures and best management practices (BMPs), as detailed in the Integrated FR/EA,

Section 4.22 (pages 108-109), will be implemented to minimize impacts. No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the Recommended Plan. Measures and BMPs include limiting in-water work to the winter, deploying silt curtains, and conducting fish exclusion efforts, monitoring turbidity and sediment mobilization, prevention of petroleum product spills, use of clean fill, filling interstitial spaces between riprap, use of nature-based designs, and minimizing disturbance areas.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, USACE has prepared a Biological Assessment (BA) to evaluate the potential effects to ESA-listed species. USACE has determined the proposed action is “likely to adversely affect” ESA-listed fish species. USACE initiated formal consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service (Services) for ESA-listed Chinook, Sockeye, steelhead, and bull trout. USACE received the Services’ Biological Opinions on August 29, 2024, and September 26, 2024. All terms and conditions, conservation measures, and reasonable and prudent alternatives and measures resulting from these consultations shall be implemented in order to minimize take of endangered species and avoid jeopardizing the species.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, USACE determined that that historic properties would not be adversely affected by the Recommended Plan and received concurrence on that determination from the Washington State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on January 24, 2023. As a part of the Section 106 process, the causeway, which does meet the definition of a historic property, was evaluated, and found to not be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA is complete and included consultation with the Washington SHPO and Federally Recognized Tribes, as appropriate.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended (CWA), the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the Recommended Plan has been found to be compliant with Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230), as the project fits within the parameters of Nationwide Permit 27. USACE determined that the placement of riprap (fill material) along the south shoreline of Bateman Island and the north shoreline of the mainland, for the purpose of bank stabilization and mitigation against erosion, would constitute a discharge of fill material as regulated under Section 404 of the CWA and therefore would require CWA 401 certification.

To achieve compliance with the CWA, Section 402, USACE determined that implementation of the Recommended Plan would not involve a point-source discharge of pollutants.

A 30-day public and state/agency review of the draft FONSI and FR/EA was completed on April 10, 2023. Responses to all comments received were incorporated into the final FR/EA.

All applicable environmental laws have been considered and coordination with appropriate agencies and officials has been completed.

Technical, environmental, economic, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in the evaluation of alternatives. Based on this report, the reviews by other Federal, State, and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the Recommended Plan would not cause significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

KATHRYN A. WERBACK
Lieutenant Colonel, EN
Commanding

Date