

# EVALUATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICANT PREPARED ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT (ER) AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

## City of Juliaetta Emergency Water Project

City of Juliaetta  
Latah County, Idaho

June 8, 2020

### I. Introduction and Background Information

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District (Corps) proposes to assist the City of Juliaetta, Idaho (City) with a water system repair project under the authority of Section 595 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1999 [Public Law (PL) 106-53], as amended in 2003 by PL 108-7, Section 126 to include Idaho. The City of Juliaetta is a small community of around 600 residents located north of the Nez Perce Indian Reservation in Idaho. On February 4, 2018, the City suffered a depressurization event throughout 70% of the water system and lost an estimated 300,000 gallons of water. High water flow on the Potlatch River severed a water main within the river causing the depressurization and completely cutoff water to five houses on the left side of the river. A temporary water supply has been provided to those houses via direct connection to a City well. However, this connection cannot provide the minimum 20 psi needed to provide enough pressure for firewater.

The project area includes approximately 0.50 acres in Latah and Nez Perce Counties. In Latah County (west side of Potlatch River) the project area encompasses property owned by the City that is used for surface water treatment in conjunction with the City's public water system. A paved public recreation trail bisects the water treatment building and the Potlatch River. Crossing the Potlatch River to the west, the project area includes portions of land owned by Nez Perce County and two private land owners.

The water main would be designed to achieve the following performance criteria:

1. System pressure – The minimum water pressure under non-fire events shall be 40 psi and under fire events a system wide pressure of 20-psi must be maintained.
2. Pipelines – Replacing the system's older cast iron, transite, and galvanized steel pipelines to a larger diameter pipe would help meet fire flow demands. The new pipelines would also eliminate flow restrictions in the current system. The use of HDPE and PVC pipe would increase the life expectancy of the current water system for many years and eliminate potential iron bacteria buildup on the newly installed lines.
3. Isolation Valves – Isolation valves would be strategically located in both the old and new sections of the distribution system. Additional isolation valves throughout the system would improve serviceability and allow smaller sections of town to be isolated for mainline repairs, shutdowns, and flushing.
4. Fire Hydrants – Fire hydrants with supply lines assumed to be less than 6 inches would be replaced with new fire hydrant assemblies, as well as have new 6-inch

supply lines installed. Fire hydrants would also be used for flushing the water system, which also helps decrease biofilm in the system. If biofilm is dislodged and removed from the system during flushing events, it is not available to foul or clog meters. Frequent flushing of the system after the hydrants are installed is recommended to remove as much of the biofilm as possible during the early stages of use.

5. Service Lines – During installation the City should notify homeowners who have a galvanized service line between their water meter and their home that lines would be inspected and replaced.

The City plans (with Corps cost-share assistance) to design and replace the water main under the Potlatch River, using directional drilling and cast in-place methodology. The Corps and the City have agreed the Corps would provide \$250,000 in funding for design, replacement and construction inspection of the water main. Corps funds would also cover Project Partnership Agreement package preparation, process reimbursements, the Corps National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, project management, and Corps real estate support. This is hereafter referred to as the “Corps Project.” This action is not declared an emergency by the Corps.

## **II. Applicant Prepared Environmental Assessment**

In accordance with 40 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 1506.5(b), the Corps is authorized to permit applicants to prepare an environmental assessment, as long as the Corps performs its own evaluation of the environmental issues and makes its own findings on potential impacts. Alternatives were discussed the City of Juliaetta Water Distribution Facility Plan Study (FPS) (Great West Engineering 2019). The City submitted the *City of Juliaetta Emergency Water Project Environmental Report (ER)*, dated September 14, 2018, and an *Environmental Report amendment* dated March 5, 2019 prepared by Great West Engineering analyzing the impacts of the alternative discussed in the FPS. The Corps had no role in the preparation of the ER, but did undertake an independent review of the document and determined the information contained therein is accurate and satisfies the requirements of NEPA, except as supplemented or explained below in Section V. The FPS, ER, ER amendment are, therefore, incorporated (in their entirety) herein by reference and made a part hereof, as Attachment A.

## **III. Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the Corps Project is to assist the City, under Section 595, with the design and replacement of the severed water main. The Project is needed to replace the water main and restore water supply to the five houses located on the left side of the Potlatch River and to restore pressure for firefighting water.

## **IV. Project Alternatives**

Two alternatives were considered in the City of Juliaetta Water Distribution Facility Plan Study (FPS) (Great West Engineering 2019), and analyzed in the ER, to improve the water distribution system in Juliaetta:

**Alternative 1 - “No Action” Alternative:** Under the No Action Alternative the City would not replace the severed water main. Implementation of this alternative would result in continued risk of inadequate fire flow pressures and volumes in the areas shown to be deficient. The City would continue to operate the potable water supply, storage and distribution system to provide consistent pressure and volume as economically as possible given the severed water main. The primary water supply is the surface water treatment plant which feeds directly into the distribution system and ultimately to Reservoir R1. From Reservoir R1, water is pumped up to Reservoirs R2 and R3, which control the system pressure (with two pressure reducing stations). Water levels in Reservoirs R2 and R3 control the booster station pumps. The current operation scenario of the system utilizes the existing facilities to provide consistent pressure and flow while minimizing the pumping cost with water storage in Reservoirs R2 and R3. Well #5, and #9 are the only active wells connected to the system at this time. These wells draw from a lower confined aquifer below the clay. Normally the clay offers protection to the lower aquifer from surficial activities however contaminants (nitrates) related to such activities have been detected in the well #5 at an increasing rate over the last 3 years

**Alternative 3 - Reconnection of the mainline across the Potlatch River to Well #5 (Proposed Alternative):** Reconnection of the water main would take place approximately 10-feet below the river bottom of the Potlatch River with the horizontal directional drilling construction method. A specialized contractor would drill a horizontal hole between a sending and receiving pit while not disturbing the river. Excavation of the sending pit would be located on the City owned property adjacent to the existing water treatment facility. The site is previously disturbed ground where multiple subsurface water mains feeding the treatment plant are located. The sending pit is estimated to be approximately 5-feet wide by 10-feet in length with a depth of approximately 2-feet below ground surface. The receiving pit would be located on the east side of the river. The receiving pit would be approximately 10-feet wide by 10-feet long and approximately 6-ft below ground surface. The location of the receiving pit would also be the connection point to the existing waterline on the east side of the Potlatch River. A permanent access vault would be installed on the west side of the new main line to provide for future testing and maintenance.

The Corps determined the No Action Alternative would not effectively satisfy the purpose and need for the project for design and replacement of the City’s severed water main, restoring water supply to the five houses located on the left side of the Potlatch River, or adequately restore pressure for firefighting purposes. The No Action Alternative would leave five houses without a permanent water supply and without water available for firefighting, which would not satisfy the purpose and need for the project, but is carried forward for evaluation as required by NEPA for comparative purposes. Alternative 3, the Reconnection of the mainline across the Potlatch River to Well #5 (Preferred Alternative) satisfies the purpose and need for the project and is also carried forward for evaluation.

## **V. Environmental Effects**

The ER focused on the potential environmental impacts within the boundary shown in Figure 1-2 of the ER (Attachment A). The following resources were evaluated and discussed in either the FPS, ER, and ER Amendment (Attachment A).

- Topography
- Geology
- Soils
- Climate
- Population
- Economic / Social Profile
- Land Use
- Wetlands
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Flora and Fauna
- Recreation and Open Space
- Agricultural Lands
- Air Quality
- Energy
- Water Quality
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Floodplains
- 

The proposed water line repair is not projected to significantly impact the assessed resources located in the proposed action area.

**Endangered Species Act (ESA).** An Endangered Species Act (ESA) species list from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the proposed action encompassing the action area was obtained on February 6, 2020 (01EIFW00-2019-SLI-1842). Spalding’s catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*) is the only species on the list.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has seven species listed in the project area (Table 1). The Potlatch River is critical habitat for Snake River Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). There is no effect to threatened or endangered fish, because no in-water work would occur. Work would not occur within the floodplain, but best management practices (straw waddles, silt fences, and no discharge of groundwater into the river) would still be used to ensure no impacts would occur to water quality or threatened or endangered fish.

**Table 1. Endangered Species Act Species List and Effect Determinations.**

Species	Scientific Name	Listing Status	Species Effect	Designated Critical Habitat	Critical Habitat Effect
USFWS					
Spalding's catchfly	<i>Silene spaldingii</i>	Threatened	No Effect	No	No Effect
NMFS					
Snake River steelhead	<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>	Threatened	No Effect	Yes	No Effect
Snake River fall-run Chinook salmon	<i>O. tshawytscha</i>	Threatened	No Effect	Yes	No Effect
Snake River spring/summer-run Chinook salmon	<i>O. tshawytscha</i>	Threatened	No Effect	Yes	No Effect
Snake River sockeye	<i>O. nerka</i>	Threatened	No Effect	Yes	No Effect

**Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA).** Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are protected by the BGEPA. Bald eagles sometimes inhabit the Potlatch River corridor near Juliaetta. Although construction would take place during bald eagle nesting season which last from late February to early May, no trees or other bald eagle roosting habitat would be affected by the proposed pipe replacement. The proposed project improvements would not affect bald eagles.

**Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).** Construction would take place during the migratory bird nesting season (April 1 through August 15). A qualified biologist must conduct a nest survey in the vegetation within the proposed action area and ensure the contractor does not remove trees with nests in order to avoid “take” of migratory birds.

**National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).** The US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (USDA-RD) conducted the Section 106 consultation, and acted as the lead agency under the 36 CFR Part 800 regulations. Consultation occurred with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer and the Nez Perce Tribe. The SHPO stated in a letter dated 30 August 2018 that the project would result in no adverse effects to historic properties, and no comments were received from the Nez Perce Tribe. The Corps completed a review (Attachment B), and determined that the consultation efforts were sufficient to meet the requirements of the regulations, and that the USDA-RD appropriately acted as the lead agency in accordance with the regulations.

**Clean Water Act (CWA).** Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344) requires a Department of the Army permit be obtained for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

The Corps Regulatory Office in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho reviewed the proposed project and determined that the entry and exit points for the directional drill are outside of waters of the U.S., including wetlands and that there won't be a discharge of fill material into waters of the U.S. (Attachment C). Therefore, no CWA Section 404 compliance is required (Attachment C). The project area is 0.5 acres and the drilling would occur in areas of 400 square on both sides of the river outside of the floodplain. The proposed action would disturb less

than one acre of ground and therefore would not require a Section 402 permit; however best management practices (straw wattles, silt fences, and no discharge of groundwater into the river) would still be used to ensure no impacts would occur to water quality will.

**Executive Order 11988: Floodplain Management.** This EO requires Federal agencies avoid to the extent possible, the short- and long-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative. No work or staging of equipment in the floodplain for the directional drilling is proposed to replace the waterline. Therefore, there would be no adverse impacts to or development in floodplains.

## **VI. Coordination**

The Corps distributed the draft FONSI for a 15-day public review and comment period between May 15, 2020 and June 2, 2020. Project notification letters went to the following agencies, organizations, and Tribes: Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Environmental Protection Agency, Great West Engineering, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Water Resources, Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Clearwater Economic Development Association, Nez Perce Tribe, the City of Juliaetta Mayor and City of Juliaetta. There were no comments received during the comment period.

## **VII. Finding**

Having reviewed the ER, I find that the actions covered by the ER are substantially the same actions that the Corps is authorized and committed to participate in pursuant to Section 595 of the Water Resources Development Act 1999, as amended, with the City. Further, the ER provides sufficient discussions on the need for the proposed action, alternatives, the environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted. Finally, after an independent review of the ER, the Corps has determined the document provides both sufficient evidence and analysis to meet its requirements pursuant to NEPA, except as supplemented or explained above.

I have taken into consideration the technical aspects of the project, best scientific information available, and information contained in the ER. Based on this information, I have determined that the Corps Project would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, and therefore an environmental impact statement is not required. The Corps will proceed to fund the Project under the authority of Section 595 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999, when funds are made available for that purpose.

---

CHRISTIAN N. DIETZ  
Lieutenant Colonel, EN  
Commanding

---

Date

Attachment A: City of Juliaetta Water Project Facility Planning Study and Environmental Report dated September 14, 2018, amended March 5, 2019

Attachment B: Cultural Resources Record of Internal Review dated March 3, 2020

Attachment C: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Office Correspondence dated October 31, 2019

# **ATTACHMENT A**

## **City of Juliaetta Water Project Facility Planning Study and Environmental Report**

**ATTACHMENT B**  
**Cultural Resources Record of Internal Review**

**ATTACHMENT C**  
**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Letter**