

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

LITTLE WOOD RIVER, GOODING, IDAHO

DRAFT INTEGRATED LETTER REPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

(GOODING CANAL REHABILITATION)

NOVEMBER 2023

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 *Little Wood River, Gooding, Idaho, Draft Integrated Letter Report and Environmental Assessment* (ILR/EA) for the rehabilitation of the Gooding Canal, dated November 2023, addresses the feasibility and new opportunities for management of localized flood risk and rehabilitation of the Gooding Canal portion of the Little Wood River through the City of Gooding in south central Idaho.

The ILR/EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would reduce flood risk induced by aging channel infrastructure and original channel design shortcomings in the study area. Section 3057 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007, and associated USACE Implementation Guidance, required identification of the least cost, feasible alternative, and not necessarily the National Economic Development Plan. Additional legislation passed in Section 8335 of WRDA 2022 provides for additional Federal funding and directed that this previously authorized project include the removal and replacement of the five vehicle bridges, to be cost shared at the 90 percent Federal/10 percent non-Federal split.

Alternative 4, Combination of Repair and Replacement of Channel Walls and Replacement of Vehicular and Pedestrian Bridges, was chosen as the Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative and includes the following:

- A combination of repair and replacement of degraded channel walls. This alternative would replace severely damaged walls in the lower reaches and allow for repair in the upstream reach where the channel wall is still in relatively good shape. This alternative would provide flexibility to respond to existing conditions. Repairs could include concrete patches or reconstruction of the existing wall, depending upon the severity of the deterioration.
- Replacement of five vehicular bridges and abutments to eliminate ice jams and replacement of three pedestrian bridges with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant bridges.
- Implementation of specified mitigation and Best Management Practices (BMPs) noted below.

In addition to the No Action Alternative, three other action alternatives have been evaluated. The action alternatives included Alternative 2, Replace Existing Channel Walls; Alternative 3, Repair Existing Channel Walls; and Alternative 4, Combination of Repair and Replacement of Channel Walls and Replacement of Vehicular and Pedestrian Bridges. Only two alternatives were analyzed for potential environmental effects, Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative, and Alternative 4, Combination of Repair and Replacement of Channel Walls and Replacement of Vehicular and Pedestrian Bridges. Alternative 4 was identified as the Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternatives as it is cost effective, it is feasible, and satisfies the purpose of flood risk reduction.

Table 1 summarizes the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of Alternative 4 (Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative). All practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative. Section 6.10, “Environmental Commitments” of the ILR/EA provides the applicable environmental commitments and implementation of the BMPs. Appendix L to the ILR/EA includes the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between USACE and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), which defines a mitigation plan that would include design and construction of interpretive signs and kiosks from stones that will be removed from the channel walls.

Table 1. Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative

<u>Environmental Resources</u>	<u>Insignificant Effects</u>	<u>Insignificant Effects as a Result of Mitigation</u>	<u>Resource Unaffected by Action</u>
Aesthetics	X	-	-
Agriculture/Prime and Unique Farmlands/Land Use	X	-	-
Air Quality	X	-	-
Aquatic Resources/Fisheries	-	X	-
Climate/Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas	X	-	-
Cultural Resources	-	X	-
Cumulative Effects	-	X	-
Hazardous, Toxic and Radioactive Waste	-	-	X
Hydrology	X	-	-
Noise	X	-	-
Recreation	X	-	-
River Hydraulics	X	-	-
Socioeconomics/Environmental Justice	X	-	-
Topography/Geology/Soils	X	-	-
Transportation	X	-	-
Vegetation	X	-	-
Water Quality	X	-	-
Wildlife/Threatened and Endangered Species	-	-	X

General and Biological Commitments/BMPs:

- Erosion control measures shall be properly installed and provide adequate coverage for disturbed areas or associated areas subject to construction-related runoff.
- Timing of project shall not be adjusted beyond the proposed dates more than 2 weeks without further review.
- Spreading of excess materials shall be conducted in a manner to eliminate the potential for any of the material to become airborne and enter any fish-bearing water body or enter any fish-bearing water body by other means such as runoff.
- Reseed or replant disturbed areas, if any, with native materials and seed to minimize the invasion of noxious weed species, and subsequent use of pesticides, as well as potential for runoff.
- Use BMPs to minimize potential impacts to wildlife not addressed in the ILR/EA.

- Use BMPs to minimize potential impacts to vegetation.
- Minimize footprint of disturbance to smallest area possible.
- No construction activities should occur in the river channel between March 15 and July 15 to protect spawning and rearing fish species.
- River flows should be gradually reduced to allow fish and wildlife to migrate to suitable habitat.
- Stranded fish should be salvaged and relocated into suitable habitat.
- Post-construction monitoring should be required to assess short- and long-term effects of dewatering.
- Options for habitat-based mitigation (e.g., wetland habitat restoration and protection) should be available based on the monitoring results.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, USACE determined that the implementation of the Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative would have no effect on federally listed species or their designated critical habitat.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, USACE determined that historic properties may be adversely affected by implementation of the Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative, therefore, USACE and the Idaho SHPO entered into an MOA, dated June 15, 2021. All terms and conditions resulting from the MOA shall be implemented to minimize adverse impacts to historic properties:

- Stipulation 1: USACE shall develop an interpretive panel and kiosk as part of the design phase. The content of the panel may include one or all of the following: information about the channel itself, the Works Progress Administration program that led to construction of the canal and bridges, or regional architecture using local available lava stone. USACE will provide the Idaho SHPO a period of at least 30 days to review any draft final content proposed under this stipulation. The content for the interpretive panel and kiosk will be completed by a person or firm who meets Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications for history.
- Stipulation 2: USACE will oversee a historic property survey that will document no less than 50 historic-age properties (buildings, bridges, canals, etc.) that were constructed using the locally available "lava rock." The reconnaissance survey will begin in the city of Gooding and continue into Gooding County with the goal of identifying at least 50 historic properties that have not been previously recorded. The following tasks will be completed:
 - 1) An Idaho Historic Sites Inventory (IHSI) form will be prepared to document each surveyed property (One hard copy and one digital).
 - 2) A National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) significance evaluation will be provided in the "comments section" of each IHSI form. The consultant will evaluate the integrity of any property determined to be NRHP-eligible.

3) Each IHSI form will adhere to requirements defined in the 'Consulting with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office' guidance document and will include at least two photographs; required maps; precise location of each historic property surveyed; and IHSI database entry for all required fields in the IHSI database.

4) Required [Geographic Information System] data for the survey and each property recorded.

All work under Stipulation 2 will be completed by a person or firm who meets Secretary of the Interior's 'Professional Qualification Standards' for architectural history. If USACE, or its representative, cannot locate 50 lava rock structures within the county, USACE and SHPO shall have a meeting to identify nearby sites that may be appropriate. The SHPO will have 60 days to review the survey data and ask for revisions, if necessary.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of fill material associated with implementation of the Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative has been found to be compliant with Sections 404 and 401 of the Clean Water Act as met through Nationwide Permit #3, Maintenance.

Pursuant to NEPA's public involvement process, the original Federal, Tribal, state, and public review and comment period of the *Gooding Flood Control Project Rehabilitation Report and Environmental Assessment* (Report/EA) was conducted in September 2016. Two comment letters were received and addressed. As a result of very recent (September–October 2023) updates and revisions to the scope of the proposed action and alternatives, an additional, final public review and comment period will begin on November 6, 2023, and conclude after 15 days on November 20, 2023.

I have considered the environmental, social, and economic effects; the engineering feasibility; the comprehensive review by my staff in the ILR/EA; and comments received as a result of the public review period for the *Little Wood River, Gooding, Idaho, Draft Integrated Letter Report and Environmental Assessment* for the rehabilitation of the Gooding Canal. The Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative presented is in the overall public interest, technically sound, environmentally acceptable, and the most cost-effective solution. It is my determination that implementation of the Recommended Plan/Preferred Alternative would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

SHAILIN Y. KINGSLACK
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander

DATE