

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
LITTLE WOOD RIVER, GOODING, IDAHO
INTEGRATED LETTER REPORT
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
(GOODING CANAL REHABILITATION)
DECEMBER 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, Integrated Letter Report and Environmental Assessment* (ILR/EA) for the rehabilitation of the Gooding Canal, dated December 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 allows for the reconstruction or replacement of bridges, to be cost shared at a 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 6.11, “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	-
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

As detailed in the ILR/EA, BMPs will be implemented to minimize adverse impacts to fish and wildlife from construction activities during project implementation. These include partially dewatering the channel to work in the dry, fish salvage, diverting flow into existing irrigation ditches, erosion control measures, project timing for in-water river channel work, reseeding or replanting disturbed areas with native plants, and post construction monitoring. (Refer to Appendix G for further information on avoidance and minimization measures.)

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 December 2023. All terms and conditions resulting from the MOA shall be implemented to minimize adverse impacts to historic properties. USACE shall ensure that the following stipulations are carried out:

1. The City shall develop an interpretive panel or kiosk as part of the design phase of the larger project. The kiosk must incorporate one of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) plaques, found on the vehicular bridges, into its content. The content of the panel may also include one or all of the following themes: information about the channel itself, the WPA program that led to construction of the canal and bridges, or regional architecture using local available lava stone. The City shall provide the SHPO a period of at least 30 days to review any draft final content proposed under this stipulation. The City may retain any additional WPA plaques it would like to for display and interpretive purposes. Any remaining WPA plaques not retained by the city at the time of demolition shall be removed and turned over to the Idaho State Historical Society, to be retained at the expense of the state.

2. USACE will oversee a historic property survey that will document no less than 50 publicly accessible historic-age properties (buildings, bridges, canals, etc.) that were constructed using the locally available “lava rock.” The architectural 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) A Secretary of the Interior (SOI)-qualified architectural historian performing a literature review within the Idaho Cultural Resources Information System (ICRIS) to identify previously recorded properties.
- 2) Prepare resource records within the ICRIS for each of the identified properties. Each of the required fields within the ICRIS will be completed, including locational information and a minimum of two photographs.
- 3) USACE will review the survey for completeness and to ensure that the survey meets the SHPO guidelines.
- 4) SHPO will review the survey and resource records within 45 days of submission.

3. USACE will oversee a historic property survey that will document any publicly accessible historic-age buildings located within the areas identified in the Gooding Survey Area (Appendix A of the MOA), which have not previously been recorded. For this survey the following tasks shall be completed:

- 1) An SOI-qualified architectural historian performing a literature review within the ICRIS to identify previously recorded properties.
- 2) Prepare resource records within the ICRIS for each of the identified properties within the survey area. Each of the resource record required fields within the ICRIS will be completed including locational information, a minimum of two photographs.

- 3) USACE will review the survey for completeness and to ensure that the survey meets the Idaho SHPO guidelines.
- 4) Idaho SHPO will review the survey and resource records within 45 days of submission.

4. All work under Stipulation 2 and 3 will be completed by a person or firm who meets SOI's Professional Qualifications 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 (CWA) of 1972, as amended, 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). The Recommended Plan meets the requirements of Nationwide Permit (NWP) No. 3 (Maintenance Activities). CWA compliance for Section 404 will be satisfied through using NWP 3 and its associated Water Quality Certification (WQC) pursuant to section 401 of the CWA. NWP includes the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of any previously authorized, currently serviceable structure. Idaho Department of Environmental Quality has partially denied certification for activities authorized under paragraph b of NWP 3 (the removal of accumulated sediments and debris outside the immediate vicinity of existing structures [e.g., bridges, culverted road crossings, water intake structures, etc.]). Individual certification would be required for the removal of channel sediments and debris to facilitate construction. All conditions of the WQC will be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to water quality. There are no compensatory mitigation requirements related to CWA related to this project.

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 began on November 6, 2023, and concluded after 15 days on November 20, 2023. One comment letter was received that requested consideration of updated cultural resource impact mitigation, which is incorporated above and in Appendix L. The letter also asked that consideration for pedestrian access on vehicular bridges be considered. Such access will be considered in the planning, engineering, and design phase of the project implementation.

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

GEOFFREY R. VAN EPPS
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding

DATE