



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

Portland District  
CENWP-PM-E  
PO Box 2946  
Portland, OR 97208-2946

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL  
ASSESSMENT**  
**AND**  
**DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT  
IMPACT (FONSI)**

**Post Office Lake, Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge  
Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Section 536  
Ecosystem Restoration  
Clark County, WA**

CENWP-PM-E-13-01  
Issue Date: January 23, 2013  
Expiration Date: February 21, 2013

## **30 Day Notice**

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District, and the project partner, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), propose to restore tidal flow and fisheries access to approximately 134 acres of Post Office Lake, and to restore approximately 15 acres of native riparian habitat.

The proposed restoration actions will most likely benefit a multitude of fish and wildlife species, including Columbia River salmonids that are listed under the Endangered Species Act, as well as some waterfowl and other migratory bird species. The proposed action may also impact some migratory bird species such as diving ducks and grebes as well as some macro-invertebrates that require lacustrine or semi-permanently flooded wetland habitat. Proposed restoration of tidal sloughs and riparian habitat, particularly their connectivity to the mainstem Columbia River, will better mimic the natural wetland/riparian forest/tidal channel sloughs that were historically more prevalent in the Columbia River estuary than under present conditions.

This integrated Draft Implementation Report and Environmental Assessment examines existing conditions at Post Office Lake, proposes alternatives for restoring important habitat functions, identifies a National Ecosystem Restoration plan, and evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the preferred alternative in accordance with the Corps' environmental mission and the National Environmental Policy Act. The Corps and USFWS also have become cooperating agencies for the purpose of meeting National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance requirements.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this proposed project and associated study is to evaluate plans and provide a recommended plan which restores juvenile salmonid access to Post Office Lake on the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, improves tidally-influenced habitat, improves floodplain connectivity, and develops streamside riparian habitat while still ensuring that the primary trust

resources associated with the established purpose of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge are maintained. The recommended plan, or preferred alternative for purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), must also maintain and protect the Refuge's trust species and their habitats, which include responsibility for various waterfowl species.

**Location:**

The proposed action would occur in and around Post Office Lake, which is in the Ridgeport Dairy Unit on the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge located at Columbia River miles 94.4 to 95.3 near the City of Ridgefield in Clark County, Washington.

**Work:**

The preferred alternative includes northern channel improvements, asphalt scarification, levee height reduction measures, excavation of a floodplain swale, excavation of a thermal refugia pool, and associated riparian habitat improvements. Associated proposed construction implementation activities include staging and stockpiling areas, dewatering, and work area isolation. Associated proposed maintenance structures include construction of a maintenance access bridge, extension of the existing pipe infrastructure, and replacement of the existing pump. The proposed work is further detailed in the Draft Environmental Assessment and is located electronically at the link provided below.

**Environmental Documents:**

A Draft Environmental Assessment addressing the impacts associated with the preferred alternative is available for public review and comment on the Corps' website. Additionally, as determined by the draft findings of the Draft EA, a Draft Finding of No Significant Impact is also available for public review. Both can be found at the following website:

<http://www.nwp.usace.mil/> .

In accord with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations [Federal Register, 40 C.F.R. 1508.9(a)], an Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared by a federal agency when a proposed action is not covered by a categorical exclusion or otherwise exempt from NEPA. Federal agencies use the EA to determine whether the proposed action has the potential to cause significant environmental effects. The purposes of the EA are to accomplish the following:

1. Provide evidence and analysis sufficient to determine whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.
2. Aid a federal agency's compliance with NEPA when no EIS is necessary.
3. Facilitate preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) when one is necessary.

The EA is meant to be the primary tool that federal agencies use to determine whether or not to prepare an EIS.

Completion of this draft EA will involve inclusion of responses to all public comments. Upon completion of the draft EA, a determination of significance will be made on the preferred alternative and either a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be made, concluding the NEPA process, or a decision will be made to prepare an EIS. In order to prepare an EIS, it must be determined that the proposed action will have a significant effect on the quality of the human

environment. Public input on this draft EA is encouraged as it aims to identify public concerns early in the project planning process.

**State Water Quality Certification:** State Water Quality Certification from the Washington Department of Ecology, pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) is required and will be obtained prior to project implementation. It is anticipated that the project will be covered under the pre-Certified Nationwide Permit Category # 27, for which an applicable CWA Section 404(b) (1) evaluation has already been prepared. Additional information pertinent to the Certification process will be submitted to the Department of Ecology.

**Cultural Resources:** Full survey results will be coordinated with Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and interested Native American Tribes. Although the Corps initially determined this project is likely to have “No Effect” on historic properties, coordination with Washington DAHP and Native American Tribes is ongoing, and additional stipulations that require monitoring by a professional archaeologist during ground disturbing activities and development of an approved, long-term monitoring plan may be issued.

**Endangered Species Act:** A Biological Assessment is being prepared and formal Consultation per Section 7 will be initiated to address potential effects to listed species under jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service will conduct an intra-agency Consultation for its jurisdictional species in accordance with requirements under the Endangered Species Act.

**Additional Information and Comments:** Questions regarding the enclosed environmental documents or submittal of public comments on this Draft EA should be directed to:

Barbara Cisneros, Environmental Resources Branch, telephone (503) 808-4784; via e-mail at [Barbara.G.Cisneros@usace.army.mil](mailto:Barbara.G.Cisneros@usace.army.mil); or at the address below.

District Engineer  
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To become part of the record and to be considered in the decision, comments on this notice must be sent by the above closing date. In your response, please refer to the above public notice number, title and date.

Should no response be received postmarked by the above closing date, a “no comment” response will be assumed.