



US Army Corps
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Portland District

PUBLIC NOTICE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Crims Island Section 536 Habitat Restoration Project Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment

CENWP-PM-E-04-03

Issue Date: April 25, 2004

Expiration Date: May 25, 2004

30 Day Notice

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District, proposes to implement habitat restoration activities on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service property at Crims Island, Oregon. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service propose to restore 92 acres of native tidal emergent marsh, mudflat, and side channel habitats; restore tidal flow to 88 acres of forested swamp/freshwater marsh; and reestablish 115 acres of native riparian forest habitat on Crims Island, located at Columbia River miles 54-57 on the Oregon side of the navigation channel. The restoration of tidal flow to the 88 acres of forested swamp/freshwater marsh is contingent upon acquisition of the land by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Crims Island is approximately 2.5 miles long and 0.5 miles wide at its widest point. Longview, Washington, is the nearest major city lying upstream of Crims Island at CRM 65. Clatskanie, Oregon, lies approximately 5 miles south and inland of Crims Island.

The purpose of the Crims Island Section 536 Habitat Restoration project is to restore tidal emergent marsh, tidal channel, and riparian forest habitats on the island to benefit many fish and wildlife species in the lower Columbia River and estuary. The need for habitat restoration at Crims Island is predicated upon the significant historic losses of tidal marsh and riparian forest habitat along the lower Columbia River. Over the last century, the amount of available wetland habitat in this region has decreased by about 75% over historical levels because of dike and levee building, hydrosystem operations, and other activities (NPCC 2001). A recent finding of the LCREP Science Working Group identified a number of priority projects that would provide significant benefits to fish and wildlife. The conservation of mainstem channel islands, particularly those providing opportunities for restoration, was identified as an important objective. Restoration and conservation of these islands and associated shallow water habitat would benefit estuary condition and salmonid populations throughout the Columbia River system.

Restoration of habitat for juvenile salmonids migrating through the lower Columbia River and estuary is an important component of regional recovery plans. The proposed project addresses numerous limiting factors and fish and wildlife needs identified in the 2001 *Lower Columbia River and Columbia River Subbasin Summary*. It is consistent with and will help achieve the Northwest Power Planning and

Conservation Council's biological objectives outlined in their 2000 *Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program*. The proposed project addresses the 2000 *Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion* Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives for listed salmonids and will aid in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recovery efforts for the endangered Columbian white-tailed deer.

The construction actions, consisting of placing a plug and tidegate at the mouth of the channel to dewater the site, excavation of two feet of surface material within the existing high tidal marsh footprint, and construction of tidal channels will result in short-term environmental effects. These include precluding fisheries access during the construction period and a 2-3 year period while natural revegetation of the tidal marsh habitat occurs. The plug and tidegate will be removed upon completion of construction, thus restoring tidal connection to the Columbia River. An additional channel connecting to Bradbury Slough and the Columbia River also will be constructed.

The existing high tidal marsh on Crims Island is dominated by reed canarygrass. A 2-foot reduction in the elevation of the tidal marsh habitat will remove this exotic species, provide for a greater period of tidal inundation, and provide better conditions for native tidal marsh plant communities to develop. These improvements will favor waterfowl use. Improvements in tidal inundation and additional tidal channels are intended to promote better habitat conditions for juvenile salmonids and to improve export of detritus (dead marsh vegetation) to the Columbia River.

The adjacent upland habitat, currently used for cattle pasture, will be used as a disposal site for material excavated from the tidal marsh. Once construction of the tidal marsh element is completed, the upland area will be converted to native riparian forest habitat. Establishment and subsequent maturation of riparian forest habitat will benefit fish and wildlife species through provision of food, cover, and nesting habitat plus export insects, debris, and in the long-term, large woody debris to the Columbia River.

Long-term effects of the proposed project are seen as beneficial to virtually all species that are present in the Crims Island area for all or part of their life-cycle. Without the proposed project, the productivity of habitat for fish and wildlife resources on Crims Island will not attain its full potential.

Environmental Documents: A draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment addressing the impacts associated with the activity is enclosed for public review and comment.

State Water Quality Certification: The proposed project is in compliance with the Clean Water Act through public review under both Sections 404 and 401 and issuance of the 401 Water Quality Certification under Nationwide Permit #27 (*Federal Register* 67(10): 2082-2083) and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality letter dated August 16, 2002. The Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation for the proposed project is located in Appendix A of the enclosed draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment.

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972: Not Applicable.

Additional Information and Comments for the Environmental Assessment: Questions or comments regarding the enclosed environmental documents should be directed to Geoff Dorsey, Environmental Resources Branch, telephone (503) 808-4769, or at the address below. Comments on this notice must be mailed by the above closing date to: District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineer District, Portland Attn: CENWP-PM-E/Geoff Dorsey, P.O. Box 2946, Portland, Oregon 97208-2946. In your response,

please refer to the above public notice number, title and date. Should no responses be received postmarked by the above closing date, a “no comment” response will be assumed.

