

SECTION 2. PLANNING AND OBJECTIVES

This feasibility study has been prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District (Corps) for environmental restoration of the Columbia Slough in north Portland, Oregon. This project was initially a General Investigation (GI) study, sponsored by the City of Portland. The Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement (FCSA) was signed on October 6, 1998. Early in the study process, it became apparent that the more expensive alternatives would not provide sufficient environmental benefits to be feasible. Other alternatives were suggested for investigation by the local sponsor and by the Multnomah County Drainage District No. 1 (MCDD #1), which manages the area of the proposed projects.

The proposed projects were less expensive than those originally proposed in the GI study and would be more appropriate under Section 1135 authority. The project is linked to past Corps actions in that it is located within a Corps levee system. After Congress did not appropriate any funds for the study for Fiscal Year (FY) 2000, it was suggested to the City of Portland that the project be conducted under Section 1135 authority. This would reduce the non-Federal cost share from 35% under GI authorization to 25%. The reduced cost of the proposed project is within the cost criteria for this authority. Initial city costs would also be reduced since the Section 1135 feasibility study is initially 100% Federally funded. The project could be reviewed and approved at the division level, expediting the process to reach construction.

The overall purpose of the feasibility study is to investigate and recommend ecosystem restoration alternatives for Columbia Slough which would: rehabilitate the hydrology and channel form of the Slough to create wetland bench habitat for waterfowl and turtles; establish conditions favorable to native emergent wetland vegetation and native fauna; decrease habitat degradation caused by water quality impairment (excessively high temps and low DO); and provide a channel structure and hydrology that mimic elements of a lowland side-channel off a large river. The restoration activities were evaluated for their effect on operation of MCDD #1 for flood control, vegetation management, pumping, irrigation management, water quality, and other maintenance. Potential recreational and educational opportunities based around seasonal variability will also be investigated.

2.1 General Criteria.

- The proposed modifications are consistent with the authorized purpose of flood control by the Lower Columbia River Basin Levees and Improvements at Multnomah County Drainage District (MCDD).
- The proposed work is compatible with other ongoing efforts by Federal, state, and local agencies.
- Public health, safety, and well-being will be protected.
- Analyses of benefits and costs are to be conducted in accordance with Corps regulations and must ensure that any plan is complete, efficient, safe, and economically feasible in terms of current prices.

2.2 Technical Criteria.

- The with-project condition will not worsen flood control capability for MCDD #1 or for the local sponsor (BES).
- The project should be designed to minimize the amount of regular maintenance required for the non-Federal sponsor.
- The project will support other watershed water quality mitigation and restoration efforts being conducted in the watershed by other Federal, state, and local agencies.

2.3 Environmental and Social Criteria.

- The project will create or improve floodplain wetland and upland forested habitat that will provide feeding, perching, and nesting habitat for wildlife.
- Invasive non-native plant species will be removed and/or controlled.