



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, SAVANNAH DISTRICT
100 W. OGLETHORPE AVENUE
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31401-3604**

February 14, 2019

**PUBLIC NOTICE
Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of a Draft Integrated Post Authorization Analysis Report (PAAR) and Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA), Fish Passage at New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam (NSBLD), and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to evaluate proposed changes to the Fish Passage feature of the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP). This SEA supplements the July 2012 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the SHEP. In addition Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) and Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act (CWA) (40 C.F.R. 230) notice is given.

Notice of the following is hereby given:

1. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, notice is hereby given that the Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) proposes to modify what is described in the 2012 SHEP FEIS. The proposed modifications to the Fish Passage feature of the SHEP includes a river-wide in-channel fish passage consisting of a fixed crest weir with a rock ramp sloping upstream from the existing dam location and includes a low-lying floodplain bench on the Georgia side to provide additional high flow conveyance. The existing lock and dam would be removed, including the foundation down to elevation 91.2 feet NAVD88. The resulting concrete rubble is assumed to be hauled off and disposed of at a landfill facility for cost purposes, but could be recycled as construction material. The weir would be 500 feet in width with an average crest elevation of 108.2 feet NAVD88 (109.0 NGVD29). A floodplain bench approximately 275 feet in width would be excavated down to elevation 110 feet NAVD88 on the Georgia side of the existing dam location.

2. Section 106 of the NHPA requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties that are listed or meet the eligibility criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The proposed construction of the in-channel fish passage structure requires the demolition of the NSBLD, a structure eligible for the NRHP. The USACE is developing a Memorandum of Agreement that establishes mitigation measures to satisfy its Section 106 responsibilities for this action. Consistent with its responsibility under Section 106, USACE is seeking comments on the MOA to address the adverse effect to the structure. This agreement is a draft and has not been agreed upon by the State Historic Preservation Officers or other consulting parties.

3. This Public Notice is issued in accordance with provisions of Title 33 CFR Parts 336.1(b)(1) and 337.1, which establish policy, practices, and procedures to be followed on federal actions involving the disposal of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

4. The USACE announces the availability to the public of a Draft PAAR SEA and Draft FONSI concerning the modifications to the Fish Passage feature as part of SHEP in a manner that meets the requirement of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN Act); Title I, Water Resources Development Act of 2016, Section 1319 and still meet the Fish Passage mitigation requirements of the SHEP. Copies of the documents can be downloaded from the District website at <http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/About/DivisionsandOffices/PlanningDivision/PlansandReports.aspx>. Copies may also be obtained through email request to the following address: CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil, or by contacting Ms. Robin Armetta at (912) 652-6148.

5. Written statements regarding the Draft PAAR SEA and FONSI for the proposed action and the effects of the proposed action on historic properties will be received at the Savannah District Office until

12 O'CLOCK NOON, March 16, 2019

from those interested in the activity and whose interests may be affected by the proposed action.

An open house is scheduled for March 6, 2019, between 4 and 6 p.m. at the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center, 2 10th St, Augusta, GA 30901. During the open house, people can talk to and ask questions of the subject matter experts who developed the models, analyzed the alternatives and wrote the draft document. There will also be a brief formal presentation on the draft report. All interested parties are invited to provide comments on the draft report at the public meeting in writing or orally by court reporter and comments can also be accepted by mail and email.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action consists of a fixed crest weir with a rock ramp sloping upstream from the existing dam location (Figure 1). The fish passage structure would be constructed with boulders and stone sized following the same design that was previously-approved for the bypass. The structure would have a 2 percent slope upstream to the weir crest, and a 10 percent slope downstream from the crest to the river bed. The lock and dam would be removed, including the foundation, down to elevation 91.22 feet NAVD88. The weir would have an average crest elevation of 108.2 feet NAVD88 (109.0 NGVD29). A floodplain bench (Figure 2) approximately 275 feet in width would be excavated to elevation 110 feet NAVD88 on the Georgia side of the existing dam location. The bench would ease the passage of flood waters past that point in the river. The bench would be grassed or

rock lined to prevent erosion. The floodplain bench would be partially inundated for the 1-yr return interval flow of 16,500 cfs. A new boat ramp will be built just upstream of the existing boat ramp and will require acquisition of 10 acres of commercial forested land.

Access to the fish passage structure and floodplain bench for this alternative is possible from the Georgia side of the river through the use of the existing roadway network, and a new 3/4 mile long access road. Staging during construction will be within the existing footprint of NSBLD Park. The proposed action itself consists of measures to minimize the adverse effects of storm water erosion and thus requires no separate measures or controls for compliance with CWA Section 402(p).

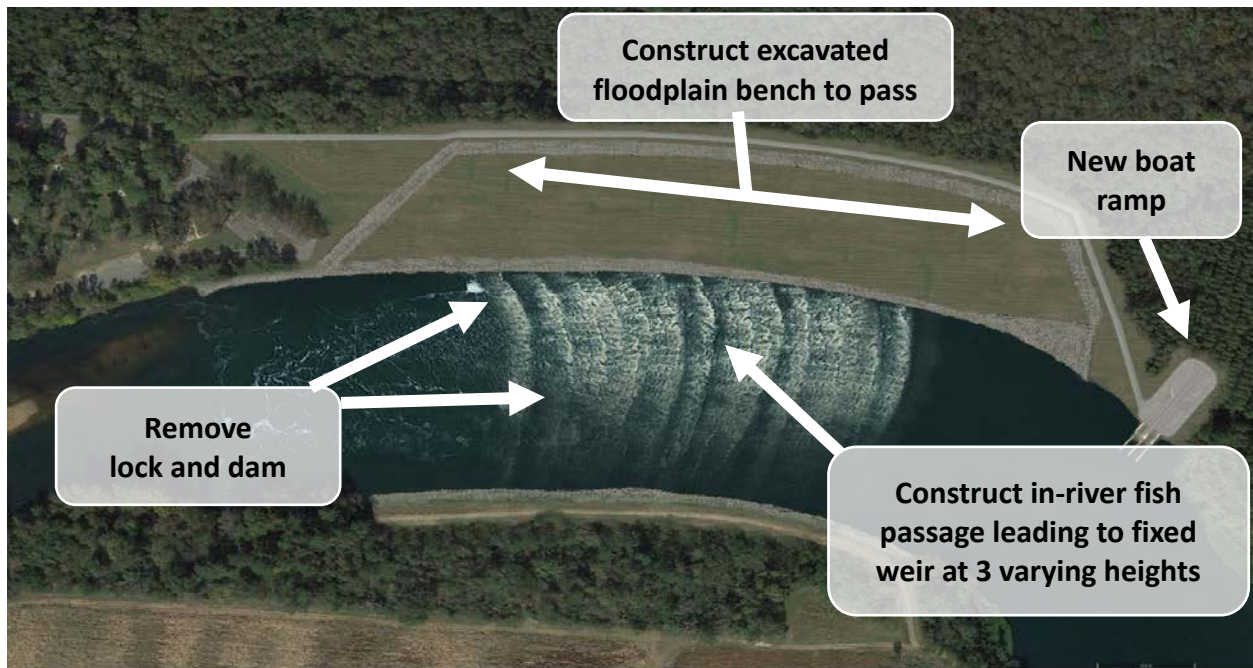


Figure 1: Rendering of the Proposed Alternative.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:

Environmental Assessment: The USACE has prepared a Draft Supplemental environmental assessment (SEA) and found that an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required for this action. The Draft SEA is being coordinated concurrently with this Notice to Federal and State natural resource agencies and public for review and comment.

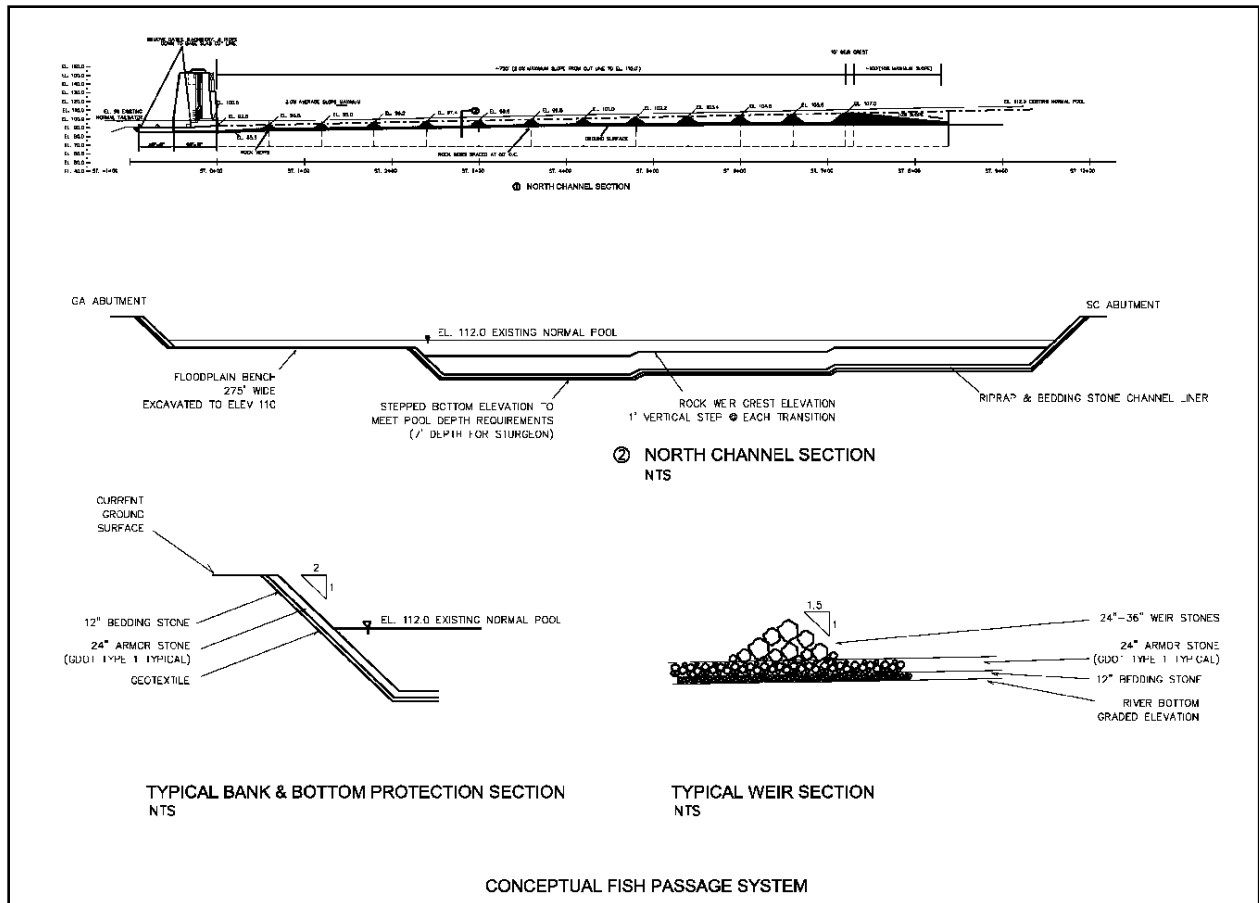


Figure 2: Floodplain Bench-2 Percent Slope Detail.

Threatened, Endangered and other Protected Species: With implementation of the proposed action, the impact to T&E Species (Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon) would be similar to those described for the plan selected in the FEIS. To reduce adverse effects to sturgeon during construction of the fish passage structure and during the removal of the existing lock and dam structure, special provisions and protective measures would be implemented to protect sturgeon. These measures are in agreement with the October 2017 amendment to the National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion for the SHEP. This updated assessment concludes that construction of the proposed action as currently designed, “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, or their critical habitat.

Cultural Resources: The proposed action requires the demolition of the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam, a structure eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A (transportation history) and Criterion C (engineering), which will result in an adverse effect on the NRHP-eligible resource. This adverse effect is being mitigated through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) per Section 106 of the National Historic

Preservation Act (NHPA). Impacts to navigation features, including pile dikes and a training wall, will be avoided through signage and marking of the resources.

Essential Fish Habitat: Within the project study area, there are not any designated essential fish habitat (EFH) areas and therefore implementation of the proposed action will not have any impacts to EFH habitat.

Water Quality Certification: Updated Section 401 Water Quality Certifications from the States of Georgia and South Carolina are not being requested for the proposed action. Materials will be placed in the waters of the U.S. to create the fish passage structure. These materials are of the same quality of those described in the 2012 FEIS.

Coastal Zone Consistency: Updated Coastal Zone Consistency concurrences from the States of Georgia and South Carolina are not needed since the proposed action in Richmond County, Georgia and Aiken County, South Carolina are outside of the coastal zone areas for both states.

Clean Air Act: With implementation of the proposed action, impacts to air quality would be similar to those described in the FEIS and still be within the de minimis level (minimal threshold for which a conformity determination must be performed for various pollutants in a project area). In addition, this alternative would not increase greenhouse gases.

Application of the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines: As part of the implementation for the proposed action, additional fill would be placed in the waters of the U.S and therefore, an updated Section 404(b)(1) evaluation has been completed.

Public Interest Review: The decision whether to proceed with the project as proposed will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both the protection and use of important resources. The benefits which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal will be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal will be considered. Among these are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife, land use, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, consideration of property ownership, environmental justice, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Consideration of Public Comments: USACE is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Native American Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the USACE in its deliberations on this action. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts to endangered species, wetlands, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and

the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of the Final EA and FONSI pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Comment Period: Anyone wishing to comment on PAAR SEA should submit comments no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice, in writing, to the Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning Division, ATTN: Ms. Robin Armetta (PM-P), 100 West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia 31401-3640, by FAX to 912-652-5787, or by emailing the comments to the following address: CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil.

Anyone wishing to comment on Section 106 of the NHPA to the USACE on this proposed action should submit comments no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice, in writing, to the Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning Division, ATTN: Ms. Julie Morgan (PM-P), 5625 Anderson Hwy, Hartwell, Georgia 30643-5259, or by emailing the comments to the following address: CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil.



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