

**RECORD OF DECISION
CENTRALIA FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION PROJECT
CHEHALIS RIVER, WASHINGTON**

The June 2003 General Reevaluation Report and Final Environmental Impact Statement (GRR/FEIS) for the Centralia Flood Damage Reduction project addressed the flood damage reduction needs of the cities of Centralia and Chehalis, in the Chehalis River Basin, Washington. Based on the GRR/FEIS, the views of other agencies and the public, and the review of my staff, I find the plan recommended by the District Engineer, Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, when modified to exclude a dam modification feature that would allow 9,000 acre-feet of additional storage capacity at Skookumchuck Dam, and subject to further evaluation and justification of the recommended compensatory mitigation, to be technically feasible, economically justified, in accordance with environmental statutes, and in the public interest. The dam modification feature will be further evaluated and will be incorporated into the project only upon the determination by the Chief of Engineers that such alternative is technically feasible and environmentally acceptable. The project consists of the following features:

- Construction of a levee system along the Chehalis River from approximately river mile 75 to river mile 64 and along most of the lower 2 miles of both Dillenbaugh and Salzer Creeks; construction of a levee along the lower approximately 2 miles of Skookumchuck River to the confluence with Coffee Creek. Where setback levees are not feasible, floodwalls will be used to protect structures and infrastructure;
- Modification to the existing Skookumchuck Dam to add a short gated outlet tunnel to create about 11,000 acre-feet of flood control storage between pool elevations 455 and 492 feet;
- Elevation of approximately eight structures that would incur induced damages from increased inundation as a result of the project; and
- Funding for compensatory mitigation of impacts to riparian and wetland communities has been included in the project recommendation. As currently formulated, the mitigation plan for the recommended project does not meet Army Civil Works policy for mitigation planning as it may over mitigate for project impacts. A post-authorization study must evaluate project impacts and mitigate for net project impacts to the extent justified, in compliance with Army Civil Works policy. Monitoring of the efficacy of any compensatory mitigation would be part of the mitigation package. The revised mitigation plan must be approved by the Chief of Engineers.

The project would provide protection from a flood event having a 1-in-100 chance of occurring in any given year on the Chehalis River and reduce flooding on the Skookumchuck, Newuakum and smaller tributaries. With the project, flood-related damages to existing residential and commercial structures and their contents would be reduced, the need to elevate Interstate Highway 5 (I-5) in the study area would be eliminated, and traffic delays related to flooding on I-5 and other critical transportation corridors would be decreased.

The plan selected for recommendation is the Locally Preferred Plan, which is a combination of the National Economic Development (NED) plan and the non-Federal sponsor's preferred higher levee on the lower portion of the Skookumchuck River. The higher Skookumchuck River levee would increase the probability of containing a flood event having a 1-in-100 chance of occurring in any given year from 20.6 percent to 99.8 percent. Impacts to riparian and wetland communities and to floodplain connectivity would be similar with or without the locally-preferred higher levee.

In addition to the "no action" alternative, various structural and non-structural alternatives were identified and evaluated. Structural alternatives included Skookumchuck Dam modifications as a stand-alone plan, overbank excavation and floodway bypass, setback levees, and flow restrictors; non-structural alternatives included structure raises, ordinances on construction in the floodways, emergency warning systems, certain restrictions on new home construction, and business and property buy-outs. Each of the alternatives and the project selection criteria against which the alternatives were evaluated are thoroughly described in the FEIS. Of the alternatives evaluated in detail, the environmentally preferable alternative is the selected plan. This is primarily due to the restricted extent and duration of flood storage at Skookumchuck Dam. Water storage in the Skookumchuck reservoir above pool elevation 477 feet could only be used for flood damage reduction. Water would be stored above this elevation no longer than 5 days for a 50-year to a 100-year flood event. For a 2-year to a 50-year flood event, water storage above elevation 477 feet should not occur more than every other year, and storage above elevation 477 feet would be no longer than 5 days for these events.

The project has been extensively coordinated with the public and with resource agencies. It is in compliance with all environmental requirements, including the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Coastal Zone Management Act, with the exception of certain pending procedural requirements normally completed after the Record of Decision, and the previously mentioned review of compensatory mitigation for unavoidable adverse project impacts.

The Corps investigated ecosystem restoration opportunities, as directed by Congress, and formulated ecosystem restoration features separately from the flood damage reduction features. In the absence of a non-Federal partner to cost share for ecosystem restoration, these features could not be included in the recommended plan. Elimination of the ecosystem restoration features had no effect on the selection of the preferred alternative for flood damage reduction and was also independent in the consideration of mitigation actions for unavoidable adverse impacts associated with the preferred alternative.

Technical and economic criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resource Council's *Principles and Guidelines*. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were

considered in the evaluation of alternatives. Based on review of these evaluations, I find that the benefits outweigh the costs and any adverse effects. This Record of Decision completes the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the GRR/FEIS. Further NEPA work may be needed to address the additional storage and compensatory mitigation issues.



John Paul Woodley, Jr.
Assistant Secretary of the Army
(Civil Works)

Date: 9 January 2006