Lower Columbia River Federal Navigation Channel Maintenance Plan

Scoping Report for the Environmental Impact Statement

MAY 2018

US Army Corps of Engineers
Portland District

COLUMBIA RIVER PORTS
LONGVIEW | KALAMA | WOODLAND | VANCOUVER | PORTLAND
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<td>CMP</td>
<td>Channel Maintenance Plan</td>
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<td>EIS</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement</td>
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<td>LCR</td>
<td>Lower Columbia River</td>
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<td>NEPA</td>
<td>National Environmental Policy Act</td>
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<td>SEPA</td>
<td>State Environmental Policy Act</td>
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1 Introduction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District (Corps) has conducted scoping in advance of preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) to consider impacts and alternatives related to continued maintenance of the Lower Columbia River Federal Navigation Channel through implementation of a Lower Columbia River (LCR) Channel Maintenance Plan (CMP). This report describes the EIS scoping process and records the results of that process. The EIS will be part of an integrated document that will also serve as the LCR CMP, referred to throughout this document as a CMP-EIS. A channel maintenance plan is needed because Corps policy requires the agency to ensure that there is enough dredged material placement capacity for a minimum of 20 years for this federally maintained navigation project, and because existing dredged material placement sites are filling up and space is needed for the dredged material generated in the future. Preparation of an EIS is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321–4347) and Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (RCW Chapter 43.21c).

1.1 Lead Federal Agency and Cooperating Agencies

The Corps is the lead federal agency under NEPA for preparing the EIS and this scoping report. The non-federal sponsors/cooperating agencies are the Ports of Longview, Kalama, Woodland, Vancouver, and Portland (Sponsor Ports). The Sponsor Ports are cooperating agencies under NEPA and the Washington ports are the co-lead agencies for actions that require compliance with SEPA.

1.2 Project Area

The project area is comprised of the Lower Columbia River Federal Navigation Channel which extends from Columbia River mile (RM) 3 to river mile 105.5 (Figure 1). The channel is 43 feet deep and generally 600 feet wide.

1.3 Description of the Scoping Process

NEPA and SEPA require environmental review processes that identify and evaluate possible effects of a project. The scoping process is required under Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 C.F.R. § 1501.7) and SEPA (RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)). It is the first step in the environmental planning process where an EIS is prepared. Scope (40 C.F.R. § 1508.25) means the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts to be considered in an EIS. The scoping process is meant to:

- Identify significant environmental issues to be analyzed.
- Identify and eliminate from detailed review those non-significant environmental issues.
- Identify any related and connected actions.
- Identify other environmental review, permitting, consultation requirements, or other approvals that may be required so they can be integrated with the EIS.
- Indicate the project schedule.
Figure 1. Project Area (Lower Columbia River Federal Navigation Channel)
During preparation of the joint NEPA-SEPA EIS, input received during the scoping process will inform the analysis of potential effects, the suite of alternatives that meet the project’s purpose and need, and the criteria for evaluation and comparison of alternatives. Specifically, this input will be used to:

- Define the breadth of environmental resources and effects to evaluate.
- Identify alternatives to be considered.
- Determine new sources of data or information.

### 1.3.1 Scoping Period

The extended scoping period ran from September 8 through November 16, 2017.

### 1.3.2 Publication of Project Information

During the scoping period, project information was available at the following website: [http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/lcrchannelmaintenance/](http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/lcrchannelmaintenance/)

### 1.3.3 Scoping Meetings

Scoping meetings were held at the dates and locations listed in Table 1. Attendance was highest in Cathlamet, Washington (about 45 people). Other meetings were each attended by about 5 to 15 interested persons.

**Table 1. Dates and Locations of Public Scoping Meetings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoping Meeting Dates and Times</th>
<th>Scoping Meeting</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, October 2, 2017 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Cowlitz County Event Center 1900 7th Avenue Longview, Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 5, 2017 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Marshall Community Center 1009 E McLoughlin Boulevard Vancouver, Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, October 6, 2017 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Charles Jordan Community Center 9009 N. Foss Avenue Portland, Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, October 16, 2017 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Meriwether Place 1070 Columbia Boulevard St. Helens, Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 17, 2017 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Maritime Museum Barbey Maritime Center 1792 Marine Drive Astoria, Oregon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1.3.4 Solicitation of Public Input

Written comments were solicited through direct emails to over 900 interested individuals and organizations, letters to Tribes, the Portland District project webpage, Facebook posts, and newspaper notices.

Comments were received via the following means during the scoping period:

- At scoping meetings, listed above.
- Online comment form – comments were received through the website at: lcrchannelmaintenancecomments.com
- E-mail: comments were received via the following e-mail account: ColumbiaNavChannel@usace.army.mil.
- U.S. Mail: comments were received via the following U.S. mail address:
  U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District,
  Attn: CENWP-PM-E
  P.O. Box 2946
  Portland, Oregon 97208-2946

Only substantive comments directly related to the scope of the EIS that were received during the extended scoping period will be considered during the EIS scoping process.
2 Scoping Comments

Fifty-four unique comment submittals were received during the extended scoping period. In addition, two general project inquiries were received. General project inquiries are not discussed in this report because they were requests for general information rather than input to inform the scope of the EIS.

2.1 Source of Scoping Comments

Of the 54 comment submittals received, 31 were from individuals (with some individuals submitting more than one comment), 11 were from businesses, 4 were from federal agencies, 4 were from state and local agencies or entities, 3 were from organizations, and 1 was from an anonymous author.

2.2 Issues identified During Scoping

The lists below offer a summary of the substantive and related topics touched on in the comments received:

- Twenty-one suggested possible dredged material placement sites (thirteen of which suggested specific sites located in Wahkiakum County, WA).
- Twenty-one comments expressed erosion-related concerns, including potential causes and requests for action to restore eroded areas.
- Fourteen expressed concerns with commercial ship/vessel operations (eight of which suggested that reducing ship speeds would reduce shoreline erosion and/or shoaling in the LCR federal navigation channel).
- Twelve expressed a need for channel maintenance of adjoining, separate federal navigation projects (ten of which referred to the area which is the federal side channel at the upstream end of Oregon Slough).
- Nine expressed a need to evaluate environmental impacts (four of which specifically mentioned effects to fish and wildlife species listed under the Endangered Species Act and their habitat). Comments suggest both beneficial and adverse effects associated with the proposed action.
- Nine suggested expanding the study area to include additional benefits of LCR federal channel maintenance, such as commercial, recreational, fishing and tourist activities.
- Eight included general statements of support for maintaining the navigation channel and/or the planning approach.
- Eight expressed support for pile dike repairs and maintenance.
- Seven expressed opposition to using certain locations for dredged material placement.
- Seven expressed a need to consider impacts on adjoining channels or local marinas (such as increased sedimentation).
• Five expressed a need to reserve adequate capacity in the Columbia River for flow lane (in-water) dredged material placement by others when considering capacity for placement of material dredged from the LCR federal channel.
• Two expressed concerns about the negative impact of dredging and dredged material placement with respect to their home environment (noise, views, loss of recreational fishing).
• Two suggested simplifying the permitting process to lower costs.
• Six addressed sedimentation/shoaling impacts.
• Several commenters requested to be added to the mailing lists for updates on the channel maintenance plan.

Topics touched on by one commenter only included:

• Cumulative impacts.
• Tribal concerns (generally).
• Increase LCR dredge capacity.
• Ecosystem services.
• Cultural resource impacts.
• Lessons learned from previous channel maintenance plan.
• Add bank protection.
• Dredge sediment from lower Cowlitz River before it enters the Columbia River (with Mt. St. Helens sediment management project funding).

2.3 Comment Relevance to the Scope of the Project
The Corps and the Ports have reviewed all of the comments received about the proposed action. As a result of that review and based on information available at this time, the Corps and the Ports have decided that no changes are needed to the elements of the environment that will be addressed by the draft CMP-EIS. The Corps and the Ports will evaluate the following elements of the environment in the draft CMP-EIS:

• Physical environment
• Air quality
• Water quality
• Biological environment
• Energy
• Noise
• Land use
• Recreation
• Aesthetics
• Historic and cultural resources
• Transportation
The draft CMP-EIS will also include review of pile dike maintenance as an element of the proposed action, in addition to dredging (which is the primary element of the CMP-EIS). Dredging and dredged material placement activities at other authorized projects in the vicinity of the project area will be included in the cumulative effects evaluation in the CMP-EIS. The analysis of these elements may be further refined as work on the CMP-EIS proceeds. The scoping comments are being used to develop the alternatives to be evaluated in the CMP-EIS.
3  Summary of Future Steps in the EIS Process

The Corps will now prepare the draft CMP-EIS. The EIS process is expected to take approximately two years. The process includes: developing and evaluating an array of alternatives with respect to their impacts on the environment; verifying the alternatives are technically feasible, will meet the purpose and need for the proposed action, and are consistent with the Corps’ and Ports’ authorities; and identifying a preferred alternative. The draft CMP-EIS will be made available for public review and comment.

The Corps will issue a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register announcing the release of the draft CMP-EIS for public comment. The Sponsor Ports will publish a Notice of Availability of the draft CMP-EIS for public comment in accordance with SEPA regulations. Documents and other important information related to the draft CMP-EIS will be available for review on the project website.

After receipt and consideration of comments received on the draft, the Corps will prepare a final CMP-EIS which will include responses to substantive comments received during the public review and comment period. The Corps’ NEPA process will be complete when the Corps’ Northwestern Division commander selects a preferred alternative and signs the Record of Decision. Should the Northwestern Division commander select an alternative that encompasses a CMP, the Corps will continue current channel maintenance practices.