



File Code: 2620/1950

Date: October 20, 2006

Dear Interested Party:

The Forest Service invites your comments on a proposal to remove a small dam near the mouth of the Sandy River. Historically, the Sandy River channel split into two courses at the Sandy River Delta; the easterly flowing original channel, and a northwesterly flowing overflow channel known then as the “Little Sandy River”.



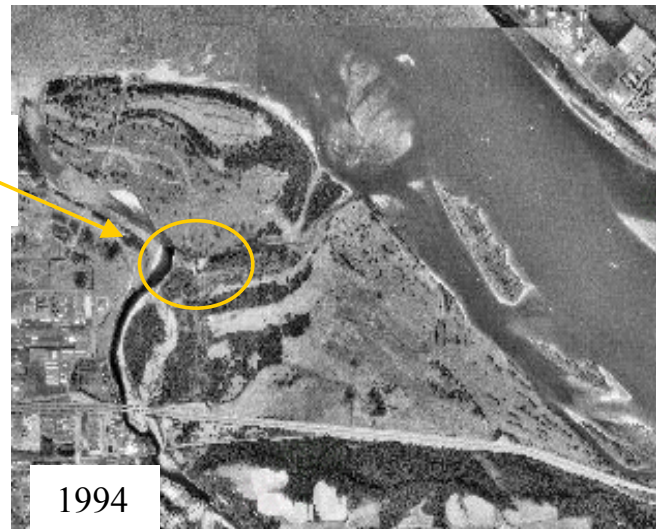
“Big Sandy River Channel Dam” 1940
Photo Courtesy Oregon State University

In the 1930’s, a small dam was placed across the original channel of the Sandy River, and the main channel was routed into its present course in the historic “Little Sandy River”. The river channel was changed because at the time people thought smelt could swim up one deeper channel easier than up the two shallower channels.



Since the 1930's, the original Sandy River channel has silted in and is now largely a seasonal slough. Water flows from east to west during the Columbia River spring freshet, and occasionally flows west to east during Sandy River high flows. The channel dries to isolated small pools in the summer.

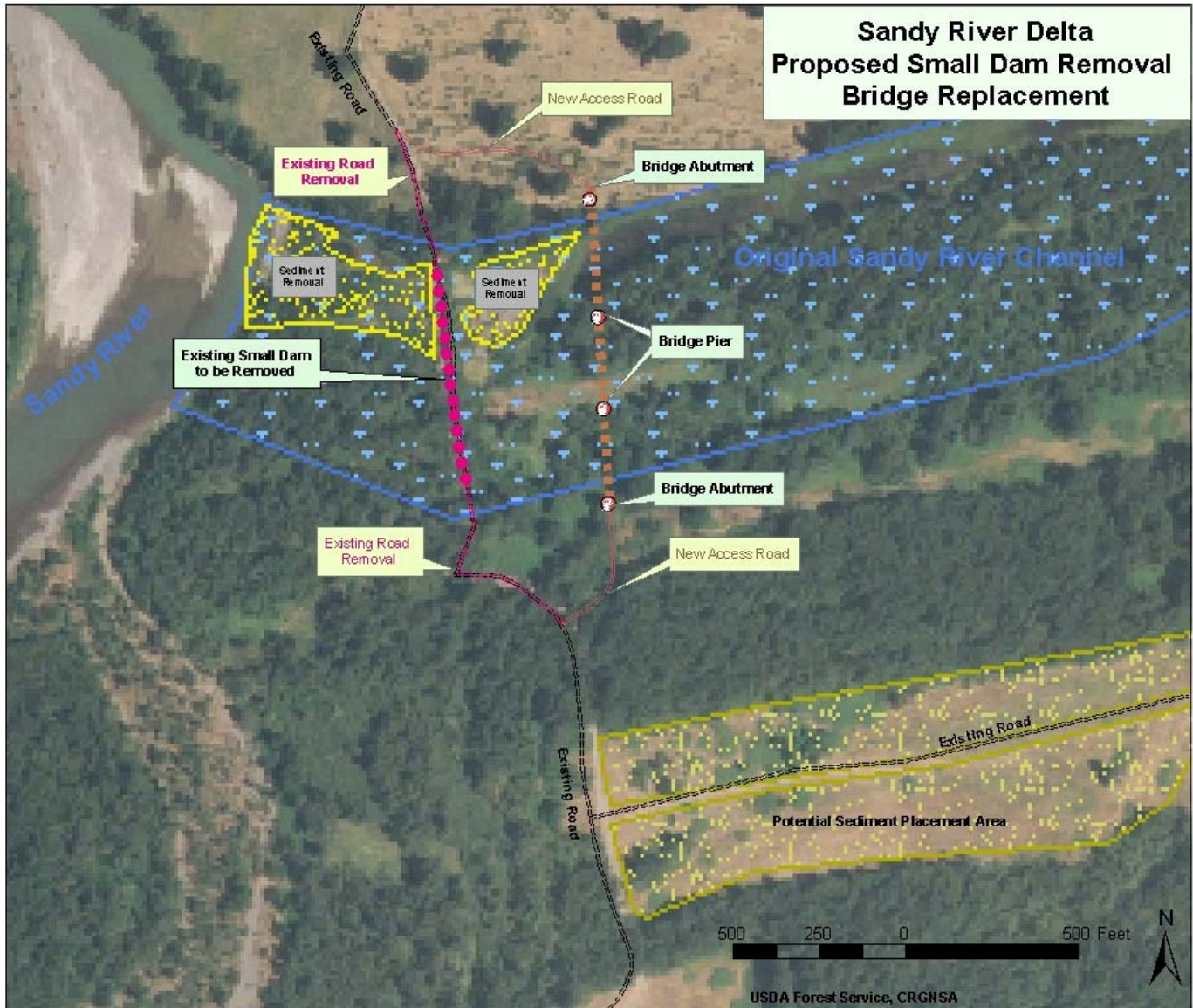
Dam
Location



The Forest Service proposes to remove the small dam to restore the natural hydrology of the Sandy River at its mouth. Many fish species would benefit from the creation of a mile (comprising about 100 acres) of new off-channel habitat. Improved habitat would result for juvenile rearing and adult holding, and a high flow refuge channel for adults and juveniles. In addition, pockets of gravel may develop for spawning habitat. This habitat would be available to migrating adults and juveniles, for all listed species in the Columbia and Sandy Rivers, including federally Threatened species. The dam is now used for vehicle access to a natural gas pipeline and the Bonneville Power Administration power lines on the northern portion of Sandy River Delta. A bridge is proposed to replace vehicle access, unless alternative access is established.

The specific proposal is (see map next page):

1. Remove the entire dam. The top of the existing dam is about 15 ft above sea level, and the dam would be removed to about 8 ft above sea level.
2. Remove an estimated 55,000 cubic yards (cy) of accumulated sediment blocking the former channel. Sediment would be removed in an area of about four acres, to an elevation of about 8 ft above sea level. The sediment would either be placed on the Delta as a soil amendment for future site restoration or removed from the site.
3. Remove vegetation (willow shrubs, bushes and a few small trees) on about four acres blocking the former channel. Willows would be salvaged for native plant restoration and any mature trees would provide large woody debris in the restored channel.
4. Construct a bridge about 12 to 14 feet wide, designed to carry vehicles for maintenance of the powerlines and gas pipeline on the northern portion of the Delta. The bridge would be about 800 to 900 ft in length, in spans of 200 to 300 ft. Two permanent support structures would be required in the channel. A few hundred cy of fill would be placed at the bridge abutments.
5. Construct about 1,000 ft of single lane road to access the ends of the proposed bridge.
6. Remove and restore about 1,000 feet of existing road to native plants.



The Forest Service contracted a detailed hydrologic analysis of the dam removal. You may review the results at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia/forest/projects/SandyRiverDeltaHabitatRestoration.htm>

We are taking comments on this proposal until November 20, 2006. Please email your comments to sandyriverdelta@fs.fed.us, or mail them to Virginia Kelly at 902 Wasco, Suite 200, Hood River, OR 97031. Please contact Virginia at (541)-308-1720 with any questions. The Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Assessment and publish it for public comment this winter.

The Forest Service has several proposals for Sandy River Delta projects. You may view an overview of these projects at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia/forest/projects/SRDBulletinBoard.htm>.

You may also contact Virginia Kelly for information about these proposals.

Sincerely,

/s/ Greg Cox

for
DANIEL T. HARKENRIDER
Area Manager