RECORD OF DECISION
COLUMBIA RIVER NAVIGATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
OREGON AND WASHINGTON

I have reviewed the Final Integrated Feasibility Report for Channel Improvements and Environmental Impact Statement for Columbia and Willamette Rivers Federal Navigation Channel, August 1999 (FEIS), the Final Supplemental Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement, January 2003 (Final SEIS), and the Columbia River Channel Improvement Project Addendum, November 2003, as well as correspondence received in response to the public coordination of these documents. I find the plan recommended by the District Engineer, Portland District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to be technically feasible, economically justified, in compliance with environmental statutes, and in the public interest. Thus, I approve that plan for construction.

Construction of a project for navigation and ecosystem restoration improvements for the Columbia and Willamette River Federal Navigation Channel is authorized in Section 101(b)(13) of Public Law 106-53, the Water Resources Development Act of 1999. As stated in the 1999 Report of the Chief of Engineers and in the Final SEIS, the Willamette River construction has been deferred until after resolution of cleanup issues associated with listed Superfund portions of the Willamette River.

The project recommended by the District Engineer is the locally preferred plan and consists of the following features:

- deepening the existing 40-foot-deep channel and three of the existing five turning basins on the Columbia River to a depth of 43 feet;
- implementation of six ecosystem restoration features;
- During construction of the project, disposal of 14.5 million cubic yards of dredged material at numerous sites, including 22 upland sites, a gravel pit, a shoreline site, in the ocean, and at in-water locations throughout the project area in water depths between 50 and 65 feet except where specifically conditioned by State approvals;
- monitoring actions, ecosystem evaluation actions, and adaptive management; and
- mitigation for the loss of 172 acres of agricultural lands, 50 acres of riparian habitat, and 16 acres of wetland habitat.

The District Engineer's recommended plan is the Environmentally Preferred Plan (EPP), modified as described below. The EPP is described in the Final SEIS and includes beneficial use of dredged material at two ecosystem restoration locations, as well as the six ecosystem restoration features, and environmental mitigation at three sites. Conditions imposed in water quality certifications and concurrences with coastal zone management programs issued by the States of Oregon and Washington do not permit full implementation of the EPP. Proposed beneficial use of dredged material at the two ecosystem restoration sites is effectively not practicable or is prohibited under the State of Oregon's conditions regarding the Tongue Point Select Area Fishery (in the case of the Lois Island site) and a traditional fishing area (in the case of the Miller-Pillar site). Ocean disposal will be utilized in lieu of Lois Island for construction

disposal, and ocean and estuarine disposal will be used in lieu of Miller-Pillar for operation and maintenance disposal. In accordance with the conditions imposed by the State of Washington, wildlife mitigation at the Martin Island embayment area will not be implemented as proposed in the Final SEIS and EPP. Dredged material that would have been placed in the Martin Island embayment will now be disposed of either at upland disposal sites (e.g., Martin Bar, Washington, and/or Reichold, Oregon) or through flow-lane disposal. The EPP included all but 80 acres of Martin Island as mitigation; whereas, the recommended plan includes the entire Martin Island for mitigation.

Careful consideration was given to the overall public interest, engineering and economic feasibility, and social, tribal, cultural and environmental effects. All applicable laws, Executive Orders, regulations, and local plans were considered in evaluating the alternatives. All practicable means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts were included in plan formulation and have been incorporated into the recommended plan. Monitoring of mitigation performance is included in the plan. In addition to a no-action alternative, both structural and non-structural alternatives were considered. The non-structural alternatives considered included upgrading the existing river stage forecasting system to improve navigation. Structural alternatives for the project were evaluated, including deepening the existing navigation channel from depths of 1 to 3 feet. Other structural alternatives included regional ports, which were evaluated at both Astoria and Longview for topping-off facilities, as well as for regional container facilities. A range of disposal alternatives, including upland, shoreline, in-water, and ocean disposal were also evaluated. All alternatives were described in the Draft and Final EIS's; those discussions are incorporated here by reference. Technical and economic criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's Principles and Guidelines.

The recommended plan was selected on the basis that it provides the most favorable combination of cost effectiveness and environmental acceptability, incorporating features to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects in accordance with the Federal and State certifications. The Corps has reviewed and evaluated documents concerning the proposed actions, the views of other interested agencies and individuals, and the various practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the construction of this project. State resource agencies issued water quality certifications and concurred in the Corps coastal zone consistency determination on June 23, 2003. Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultations were completed and "no jeopardy" biological opinions were received in May 2002 from NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. U.S. EPA was a cooperating agency and fully supports the recommended plan.

The recommended plan also includes ecosystem restoration features, monitoring actions, ecosystem evaluation actions, and adaptive management to validate conclusions of the 2001 ESA Biological Assessment and the 2002 ESA Biological Opinions and to effect change in project implementation, operation, or maintenance as determined necessary by Federal and State Adaptive Management Teams.

All practicable means to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse environmental effects have been incorporated into the recommended plan. The public will best be served by implementing the improvements identified and described in the Final SEIS as modified above.

Date: 1/9/04

CARL A. STROCK
Major General, USA
Director of Civil Works