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COLUMBIA RIVER CHANNEL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

-- REVISED --

DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL INTEGRATED FEASIBILITY REPORT
AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Public Hearing
September 10, 2002
Astoria, Oregon

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1 ASTORIA, OREGON;
2 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2002
3 6:04 P.M.

4 .
5 COLONEL HOBERNICHT: Thank you for
6 coming today. My name is Richard Hobernicht. I'm the new
7 district engineer for the Portland District, U.S. Army
8 Corps of Engineers. This is our second visit to the lower
9 river since the beginning of this process. I recognize
10 some of you from our Warrenton meeting in July. For those
11 of you I have not met, please take a moment later to
12 introduce yourself. I'm looking forward to visiting each
13 of the communities on the lower river in the weeks and
14 months to come. This public hearing, like the one last
15 week in Longview, will be run with the aid of a
16 professional moderator. I will have some introductory
17 remarks in a few minutes, but at this time I'd like to
18 turn the meeting over to Charles Wiggins to get us
19 started.

 MR. WIGGINS: Hi. My name
20 is Charles Wiggins. And thanks very much for coming to
21 this public meeting. I'm a professional mediator and
22 facilitator and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has asked
23 me to be the moderator for tonight's meeting. I'm not a
24 staff member of any agency. I don't have any interest in
25 the outcome today. My only concern is that we run a fair

1 and impartial hearing -- meeting tonight so that all of
2 you will have the opportunity to hear from the Corps of
3 Engineers about their proposal and, more importantly, for
4 them to hear from you about your comments regarding this
5 particular project. I know you have many opinions and
6 many important points to make and I want to assure you
7 that we'll provide the best process possible so you can
8 make those points heard to government officials.

9 Let me make sure that we're all at the
10 right place. This is a place in which the Army Corps of
11 Engineers is going to give an overview of the status of
12 the proposed Columbia River Channel Improvement Project
13 and to listen to what you say about that, so if that's not
14 why you're here, you might want to think about where you
15 should be. If that is what you want to do, then you're
16 certainly in the right place.

17 We're going to give you an opportunity
18 first to hear briefly from the Corps of Engineers about
19 the status of the improvements to the existing 40-foot
20 Columbia River Federal navigation channel and also the
21 document that's being prepared -- it's called the Draft
22 Supplemental Integrated Feasibility Report and
23 Environmental Impact Statement. They have prepared this
24 and hope that you will feel free to give your comments
25 both orally and in writing should you choose to do so.

1 All of your oral testimony will be transcribed by our
2 court reporter and will be made a part of the record here.
3 If you're providing written comments, you can either leave
4 them at the back of the room -- they will be collected at
5 that time -- or you can submit them to the Army Corps of
6 Engineers. I believe there's an address where you can
7 submit that in the materials for today. And if not, you
8 can talk to anyone from the Army Corps and get the address
9 of where you can submit those materials. The materials
10 will be accepted by the Corps at any time through
11 September 15th, any time through September 15th. So you
12 have some time after tonight's hearing to prepare written
13 materials and submit them, if you'd like.

14 Let me suggest just a couple of
15 administrative details. We're going to start today with
16 some brief comments from Colonel Richard Hobernicht.
17 You've already met him. He's the district engineer for
18 the Portland District, which we're in now, of the U.S.
19 Army Corps of Engineers. And then he's going to introduce
20 Laura Hicks, who is on the Army Corps staff, to give you a
21 brief presentation about where we are and what the status
22 is of this project right now.

23 We've scheduled this meeting to end at
24 9 o'clock. We have this room until 9 o'clock, so that's
25 our deadline. Each individual who would like to speak

1 will be given five minutes to make your comments to the
2 panel of Army Corps representatives here. We'll probably
3 take a break at some time to give everybody a chance to
4 stretch or do whatever else you need to do and then we'll
5 resume back here. There is a drop off box, I guess, at
6 the back for written comments.

7 Let me discuss just several ground
8 rules for this meeting that I'd like to have adhered to.
9 It's been my experience that meetings run well and you get
10 heard and the Army Corps will have the opportunity to
11 listen if we follow these and so I'd ask for your -- for
12 your participation. First, people will be called upon to
13 give written testimony in the order in which you signed up
14 on the sheets that were outside. If anybody in here would
15 like to give written -- or oral testimony, you can do so
16 at any time before the conclusion of the -- of the
17 session. Go out, sign your name on the list and you'll be
18 -- you'll be heard in the order in which you signed up.
19 If there are any elected public officials in the room,
20 they'll be recognized first. I don't know whether there
21 are. If you would identify yourselves -- if there is one
22 and you want to speak now, that's great. Otherwise, we'll
23 take everyone in order.

24 Ground rule number two: My hope is
25 that everyone will treat one another with respect. It's

1 clear that we have divergent opinions about this
2 particular subject. We're -- I'm hopeful that we'll
3 recognize the right of everyone to their opinions and to
4 be heard. So in order to do that, I'd recommend that we
5 try to keep side conversations and comments to a minimum.
6 One of the things that's tricky in this room is that
7 there's no microphone and our court reporter will struggle
8 if there's a lot of noise in the room. We want to make
9 sure that she gets the material down verbatim and I'd like
10 to make sure that I run a meeting that's as fair to all of
11 you as is possible.

12 I'll call three names and that will be
13 the first person to speak, the second person to speak and
14 the third person to speak. If you'd form a line right
15 about here so we have three people, one speaking and two
16 ready to go, it would really expedite this as much as
17 possible.

18 Remember too today that we're not
19 after a consensus. We're not going to take a vote. This
20 is a meeting in which you're being given an opportunity to
21 speak to the Corps about matters that we know are
22 important to you and important for the Corps to hear as
23 well, so please respect that opportunity that all of us
24 have. Because of time constraints and because of the
25 structure of this meeting, there will be no responses to

1 the direct public testimony. The responses will be
2 reflected in the final report that will be issued. Five
3 minutes is the time limit. That time is your own. You
4 can't -- this is not the British Parliament, so you can't
5 give your time to anyone else. Everyone in the room who
6 wishes to speak will have five minutes. And if you're
7 speaking as the representative of a group, we would
8 appreciate it if you would identify that group. And
9 there's no double dipping, so you can't speak for five
10 minutes as the representative of a group and then come
11 back and speak as an individual, if you would, please.

12 So what will happen to all of your
13 comments? The Corps will review the comments that are
14 submitted in writing. It will review the transcripts from
15 the public testimony. They'll consider all of the
16 information that you give for the improvement of the
17 Columbia River Federal navigation channel, specifically
18 the Draft Supplemental Integrated Feasibility Report and
19 Environmental Impact Statement, and then it will issue its
20 findings, including all of your comments, as a part of the
21 final record of decision. Let me run through just a
22 couple of administrative details and then turn the meeting
23 back over to Colonel Hobernicht, if I could.

24 The bathrooms are located directly
25 across the hall. There's a -- there's an open doorway.

1 And if you go through there, the bathrooms are to your
2 left and to your right. I really appreciate all of you
3 coming. This is an important meeting and I hope that we
4 will all learn a lot from it. I'd like to now ask Colonel
5 Hobernicht to make some initial remarks.

6 COLONEL HOBERNICHT: A lot of people
7 just came in in the last five minutes. We have plenty of
8 seats up here, so please come on up. Take a seat.

9 Tonight we're here to exchange
10 information with you about the Columbia River Channel
11 Improvement Project and take your formal testimony on the
12 project. As you are probably aware, the Corps just
13 completed a revised and economic analysis for the project
14 and added several new environmental restoration
15 components. This was contained in the supplemental
16 project report that we released earlier this month. I'd
17 like to point out that this is a draft report and over the
18 60-day comment period, we've asked you to share with us
19 your thoughts about this report. Your comments are
20 important to us and we will review them all. If you have
21 information you know or feel we have missed, please let us
22 know before September 15th so we can consider it before we
23 make this report final.

24 Around the room, you will find
25 representatives from the states of Oregon and Washington.

1 Please raise your hand. States of Oregon and Washington
2 back there. Is NOA Fisheries here? U.S. Fish and
3 Wildlife just stepped out. U.S. Fish and Wildlife
4 Services, port sponsors and the Corps of Engineers.
5 Please talk to the agency representatives here tonight to
6 understand how we've gotten to where we are today and
7 where we still need to go in the weeks and months to come.

8 In addition to the oral testimony that
9 will be captured by the court reporter, we'll accept your
10 written comments, if you prepared any. There's a box.
11 Where is the box? Matt's going to get the box. It will
12 be near the door for you to place them in. Matt has the
13 box back there. That's Matt with the box right behind
14 you.

15 This is the last of three public
16 hearings we scheduled in response to the draft
17 supplemental report. In addition to this session, two
18 more public hearings were scheduled along the lower river.
19 The first public hearing was held in Vancouver on July
20 31st. The second hearing was held in Longview on
21 September 5th.

22 With that, I would again like to thank
23 you for coming out tonight. I know each of you is busy
24 and I appreciate you taking the time to participate in
25 this process. I will be here through the entire session.

1 Feel free to come up and talk with me after we've
2 completed taking testimony or during the breaks. If you
3 have a question I cannot answer, I will get you in touch
4 with the right person to make sure you get your question
5 answered tonight.

6 Before we begin taking your testimony,
7 I'd like to introduce two people off to my left, Laura
8 Hicks and then Marci Cook. Marci is a member of my
9 environmental resources staff and is responsible for
10 ensuring this project meets the requirements of the
11 National Environmental Policy Act. Laura is the project
12 manager for the Columbia River Channel Improvement
13 Project. She has a short presentation before we get
14 started.

15 Laura.

16 MS. HICKS: Thanks, Colonel.

17 Can you guys all hear me? I'm going
18 to advance the slides from here and speak, if you don't
19 mind.

20 As the Colonel said and as many of you
21 know, this project starts at river mouth three on the
22 Columbia River, goes all the way to the Portland-Vancouver
23 area, river mile 106.5. It also includes the first 12
24 miles on the Willamette River. This project has been
25 authorized in the Water Resource Development Act of 1999.

1 The Willamette portion of the river is being deferred
2 until the Super Fund clean up actions are basically
3 understood and that the Corps understands what the region
4 would like to do with the contaminated sediments in the
5 Willamette and until we know what a proper disposal plan
6 would look like. So that portion is kind of tabled for
7 now. The construction is deferred and this is very much
8 just focusing on the Columbia River portion.

9 Every project with the Corps that
10 starts has to have a congressional study resolution. We
11 received ours in August of 1989. With that, the Corps was
12 directed by Congress to look at the feasibility of
13 deepening the Columbia River, to report back to Congress
14 within one year with our findings and whether or not it's
15 within the federal interest to continue into what we term
16 a feasibility study. The Corps completed our recon in one
17 year. We moved into a feasibility study. That's this
18 thing that we're looking at today. We did that in April
19 of 1994. We produced a draft feasibility report and EIS.
20 The first time we came out and did these public meetings,
21 we were doing them in the Portland area, Longview and out
22 here. We did them in October of 1998. We came back out
23 with a final feasibility report in August of 1999. We
24 sought Oregon Coastal Zone Management consistency. We
25 received a biological opinion from U.S. Fish and Wildlife

1 and National Marine Fishery Service in December of 1999.

2 The Corps then had the pieces
3 necessary to complete a Chief of Engineer's report and
4 receive our authorization. The following year in August,
5 National Marine Fisheries Service had new information that
6 related to the endangered species on the Columbia,
7 including things like contaminants in fish tissue,
8 information on the velocity, bathymetry and flow
9 conditions for salmonids. They asked us if we could look
10 at that information, so in August of 2000, they withdrew
11 their biological opinion.

12 Following that, then we received
13 denials from both the state of Washington and the state of
14 Oregon for water quality. We, basically, then, had to go
15 back, reconsult with National Marine Fisheries Service.
16 We added U.S. Fish and Wildlife to the mix. And in
17 January of this year, then, we decided to supplement the
18 document that's out for public review. We also decided to
19 take the integrated feasibility report that conforms to
20 what the Corps needs to move forward through Congress and
21 the NEPA portion, the EIS, and also included all of the
22 information necessary to comply with the Washington State
23 Environmental Policy Act. That portion of what's in our
24 document is being head up by the Washington ports and the
25 Port of Longview is the lead agency for that.

1 So in May of this year, after about 18
2 months of reconsulting with National Marine Fisheries
3 Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, we received a new
4 biological opinion for aquatic species from both those
5 agencies for nonjeopardy opinions.

6 This kind of shows us the history of
7 the different times the Corps has come out and sought
8 public opinion, public testimony for our project. We
9 started with a scoping meeting in November of 1994. We
10 came out to the region, Portland, Longview and Astoria,
11 and we asked folks to look at this, what issues are
12 important, and we received information for our NEPA
13 document. We came back out in January of '97, November of
14 '98. We're here tonight to take your testimony, your
15 concerns as relates to the project.

16 And then we also tried something new
17 in this project where we hosted 17 environmental round
18 tables where we invited different stakeholder groups to
19 sit with us and talk about the different issues that
20 related to their particular interests. We've had salinity
21 workshops, wildlife mitigation workshops, and OSHA dredge
22 material working group meetings with resource agencies,
23 both Federal and State, and stakeholder groups.

24 As the Colonel said, we came out of
25 here in July -- July 29th to kind of just share

1 information, to try to address any concerns. What the
2 Corps has heard through all of these different public
3 meetings typically down here is that we don't respond,
4 we're not very proactive, so this time we designed the
5 public process to come out first when we release the
6 report, try to have one-on-one time, address any issues
7 and concerns, have staff down here to help discuss
8 different questions that you may have, and then today to
9 receive testimony. So this is more of a listening mode.
10 The Corps doesn't typically respond tonight.

11 We also had during the first week of
12 August a cost benefit technical panel that we convened.
13 And you probably all read with the Delaware River project
14 from our Philadelphia District concerns over cost
15 analysis, so we decided to put together a technical panel
16 comprised of four economists, four cost engineers type
17 people, and they reviewed all of the information that we
18 have that's in the document that's out for public review.
19 We received their findings and they were posted to our
20 website today, so the report from this panel is now
21 available if you go to the Corps' website. We're trying
22 to keep our processes transparent as possible. And so if
23 you look at the website, you'll see kind of the
24 information the panel came up with and how that panel was
25 convened and conducted.

1 As the Colonel said, our public
2 comments are going to end on the 12th of September. We've
3 now changed that to the 15th of September and so we'll
4 accept comments up to that date.

5 As most of you know, this project is
6 kind of dual purpose, if you will, and includes both
7 navigation improvement as well as ecosystem restoration.

8 And so what changed? In a nutshell,
9 the things that we think are noteworthy are -- we've done
10 since 1999, three years of data collection on smelt. We
11 worked in conjunction with ODFW and WDFW to do research
12 and data collection for us. We're in the midst of doing
13 three years now of data collection for white sturgeon as
14 it relates to some of our deep water areas. That will
15 probably be ongoing for sturgeon. We've done extensive
16 explorations within the Columbia River and looked at areas
17 that we thought were basalt areas that would have to be
18 blasted to be removed from the channel. After the
19 explorations, all but one area has been eliminated. Those
20 areas are all deeper than the dredging prisms, except at
21 Warrier Rock. We also went back and looked at our recent
22 typographic surveys and redid the quantity calculations
23 for the sandy material in the river and this time we used
24 December of '01, January of '02 typographic surveys. We
25 have additional information that sponsoring ports have

1 worked with with Pacific Engineering International and the
2 Corps has contracted with Patel (phonetic) to try to help
3 us get a better handle on Dungeness crab. We reconsulted
4 with the Federal agencies and as a result of that
5 reconsultation, we've added six additional ecosystem
6 restoration features to the project and researched
7 monitoring actions that go along with that and we've
8 revised the cost and the benefits for the project.

9 So when you compare the 1999 documents
10 to the documents that you all have and that you're
11 reviewing, basically, dredging volumes have dropped from
12 18.4 million cubic yards to 14.5. Basalt, as I said, has
13 been reduced from 173,000 yards to 50,000 cubic yards.
14 When we produced a report in 1999, we thought that there
15 was a potential for up to five different utility
16 relocations across the Columbia River from Oregon and
17 Washington and it's been confirmed from the utility owners
18 that none of those utilities will have to be relocated.
19 And as a result of redoing the cost, adding ecosystem
20 restoration and when you looked at NED costs and NED
21 benefits -- those are the ones attributable only to
22 navigation -- the cost went from 154 million in 1999 to
23 132, almost 133 today.

24 And then when you look at the benefits
25 that the Corps uses nationally to try to see where all of

1 the navigation projects kind of stack up across the
2 nation, which projects Congress would fund, which ones OMD
3 will appropriate funds for and go into the President's
4 budget, all of our districts across the nation use the
5 same criteria to do these analyses and under the NED
6 umbrella. So the NED benefits for our project have
7 dropped from \$28 million every year to 18.3 million. And
8 then, likewise, the benefit/cost ratio has been reduced
9 from 1.9 to 1.5. So when you look at, then, the total
10 project, that includes everything from the ecosystem
11 restoration -- not just navigation but just the total
12 picture, the total project costs have gone from 160.9 to
13 \$156 million.

14 So as part of the consultation with
15 National Marine Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the
16 first three projects on the left were those that were
17 included in the first go around in 1999. All of the
18 others were added as a result of this last consultation
19 that we had with National Marine Fisheries and Fish and
20 Wildlife. What the Corps tried to do this time was to
21 work more of an ecosystem approach with basically an
22 emphasis for the ESA. We looked at areas as it related to
23 function, form and value for those species and we tried to
24 be as site specific and identify areas throughout the
25 project where we would recommend restoration components.

1 Last time when we completed our biological assessment and
2 biological opinion, there was basically an agreement
3 between the Corps and National Marine Fisheries that said
4 the Corps would try to restore up to 4500 acres
5 independent of channel deepening in the lower river using
6 our other authorities. So this time we're starting over.
7 We tried to be site specific. We tried to identify areas
8 and it was not an emphasis on total acreage. We also
9 tried to put restoration projects on more publicly owned
10 lands so that we can make sure that there was an assurance
11 that those properties would be there when we're ready to
12 do the restoration.

13 Okay. So this represents pretty much
14 the lower river, the piece that most of you commented on
15 the last go around. In the middle, you can see the
16 Columbia River Federal navigation channel. The areas in
17 red are those areas that would be removed with the
18 deepening, taken down three feet, and the areas in blue
19 are those areas that are sufficiently deep and would not
20 require dredging. The last go around, the plan was to
21 dredge off the tops of each shoal in those areas in red
22 and take them to the deep water ocean disposal site.
23 Planned today, what's in the document, is to take that
24 same material from the areas in red, place it in a
25 temporary sump -- that's that area that's kind of a

1 goldish in color, number one -- during construction and
2 then pipeline the material from the temporary sump into
3 the area we call the Lois Island embayment. The goal
4 would be to create almost 400 acres of marsh shallow water
5 habitat. And the pipeline portion could only be done
6 during the end water work period, so between November and
7 February.

8 This is aerial photography of what
9 that area looks like in conjunction with the 1935 CREDDP
10 atlas. And so you can see that that area in 1935 had zero
11 minus six bathymetry, 12 feet of water, much shallower
12 than it is today. As a result of liberty vessels in World
13 War II, this area was dredged out to hold them and it was
14 taken down to between minus 18, minus 24, and this
15 bathymetry is taken from the 1982 CREDDP atlas.

16 So what the Corps did, we went back
17 out this year to confirm the bathymetry in that area and
18 you can see there's still some pretty deep areas in that
19 area and the whole goal would be to bring it back to what
20 it was back in '35.

21 The other piece that's new in here --
22 we had it in our draft document. We took it out for the
23 final. We're putting it back in after consulting with
24 NMFS and Fish and Wildlife -- is a series of five pile
25 dikes that would be placed between Miller Sands Island and

1 Pillar Rock. These areas would be used to create shallow
2 water habitat. They would be filled with the maintenance
3 of the 43-foot channel and so the most downstream end --
4 we would fill between pile dike one and two first. We
5 figured it would take up to three years to fill that area
6 up to where the historic bathymetry was. And then we'll
7 do a series of census information, sampling data
8 collection for fish and organisms to look at how well the
9 area recovers, what fish use is and how good that actually
10 works on the Columbia between pile dikes two and three.
11 And so it's thought that, then, if we use the Lois Island
12 embayment during construction of this area during the
13 first 10 years of operation and maintenance with the
14 43-foot channel, at that point we would take any other
15 material from years 11 on out to the deep water disposal
16 site. So that's what's in the document that you're
17 looking at today.

18 This kind of shows what that
19 Miller-Pillar area looks like when you compare the 1935
20 bathymetry with the 1982 bathymetry from the CREDDP atlas.
21 And that area is mostly, as fishermen know, deeper today
22 than it was and it's a pretty active erosion area.

23 Also, we've added Tenasillahe Island,
24 kind of a series of measures that we would take. The
25 first one would be what we're calling an interim measure.

1 Then we would work to see if we could delist Columbian
2 white-tailed deer and then we would go back to Tenasillahe
3 do some long-term measures. And I'll show you those.

4 Part of our channel deepening project
5 -- the sponsors, the ports in our case, are going to have
6 to buy part of Howard-Cottonwood Island for dredging
7 material disposal, so that area in yellow shows where we
8 placed dredge material. They're going to purchase the
9 entire island that is privately held -- it's a small
10 portion from DNR that they're going to buy -- all the
11 private land on the island and then the areas not used for
12 dredge material would be available for the reintroduction
13 of Columbia white-tailed deer. So the deer would be
14 airlifted over to the island with the goal of trying to
15 sustain three distinct populations with so many of each
16 one. And then if they're sustained, those deer could
17 actually be delisted from the Endangered Species List.

18 And so what the Corps would do for the
19 interim measure on Tenasillahe, we'd first go out, do a
20 hydraulic study, look at the sloughs and the drainage
21 within the island, look at them providing fish passage
22 through the island, and making sure that if there -- the
23 tidegates are open up that we don't interfere with the
24 management of the Columbian white-tailed deer. The
25 hydraulic survey shows that this can be doable if we work

1 then to retrofit the tidegates for fish passage. At the
2 same time, we're working to delist Columbian white-tailed
3 deer. Then we would come back to Tenasillahe and actually
4 breech the flood control dike around the island and open
5 that back up to help benefit fish as well as Columbian
6 white-tailed deer.

7 Another action that we added to the
8 project was trying to create riparian habitat at Bachelor
9 Slough, which is right in the Portland-Vancouver area near
10 the Richfield Wildlife Refuge. Here, after we test the
11 material within the slough, if it shows clean of
12 contamination, we would then use that silty material to be
13 placed upland within the refuge to try to create riparian
14 habitat that will also benefit the salmonids.

15 Okay. So the next step for the Corps
16 is that once we receive all of the oral and written
17 testimony, we'll work to respond to those comments. We'll
18 then produce a Final Integrated Feasibility Report and
19 Environmental Impact Statement. We're in the process of
20 seeking water quality certification from both states
21 again. We're also applying again for coastal zone
22 management consistency determination. When we receive
23 those pieces, we would then be able to produce a record of
24 decision on our NEPA document. And then we would see if
25 we could get our project then into the President's budget

1 for funding.

2 So that's basically in a nutshell
3 what's changed in the document. We'll start the public
4 testimony. I'm going to turn it back over to our
5 facilitator. And thank you all for coming.

6 MR. WIGGINS: Thanks, Laura.

7 Laura, could you give the reference to
8 the Corps' website for anyone who doesn't have it? Do you
9 know it right off the top of your head?

10 MS. HICKS: Matt can.

11 MR. RABE: It's on the handout.

12 MR. WIGGINS: It is on the handout?

13 Great.

14 Okay. I will call your names. I'll
15 call three now to come up in the order in which you signed
16 up to speak. I'll call the name of who's up, who's next
17 and who's third in line. I've asked the Corps to assign
18 someone to be a time keeper and that person is Mark
19 Sepulla (phonetic), who's sitting up here with me and our
20 court reporter. He will be working under my direction
21 this evening. He'll set the stopwatch for five minutes
22 when I tell you to start. When there is one minute left,
23 he'll hold up a card that tells you you have one minute,
24 looking very much like that card. And when your time is
25 up, he'll hold up a card that tells you your time is up,

1 very much like that card. I'll also be keeping an eye on
2 the time, as well as on your comments, but it allows me to
3 be more focused on what you all are saying to in this
4 testimony, so I'd appreciate it if you'd follow that. At
5 the end of your time, if Mark holds up the last card,
6 would you please finish your thought so that we can move
7 on. I'm hoping that we can do that so everybody will be
8 heard. Because the meeting is transcribed, I would ask
9 that everyone when you -- when it's your turn to speak, if
10 you would please state your name and spell your last name
11 so that we'll have an accurate record of it. And, also,
12 if you are representing an organization or an agency, if
13 you would disclose that as well. That would be
14 appreciated as well. We're now ready to
15 start public comment. Are there any elected public
16 officials that would like to speak at this time?

17 For those of you, by the way, in the
18 back, there are seats up here. We can bring seats back to
19 you or you can just stand where you are, whatever you'd
20 like to do.

21 COLONEL HOBERNICHT: We've got plenty
22 of seats up here. We're going to be up here for
23 two-and-a-half hours, so -- would you like a seat back
24 there?

25 MR. WIGGINS: Do you want seats back

1 there? Anybody want seats back there?

2 COLONEL HOBERNICHT: We've got plenty
3 of seats up here.

4 MR. WIGGINS: I'm a university
5 teacher, so I know nobody wants to sit in the front row.

6 Okay. Our speakers will start with
7 Warren Banks, followed by Bruce Holte, and then John
8 Westerholm. So if the three of you would come forward.
9 And, Mr. Banks, you're first, anywhere that's comfortable
10 for you right there.

11 Please, if I ask you to speak up,
12 don't take offense. We want to get this as accurately as
13 possible.

14 MR. BANKS: Good evening, Colonel and
15 members of the Corps staff. My name is Warren Banks,
16 B-a-n-k-s. I'm Executive Director of the Columbia River
17 bar pilots located here in Astoria. There are 20 bar
18 pilots, several of whom are here tonight.

19 Thank you for providing this
20 opportunity for public comment on the Draft Supplemental
21 Feasibility Report and EIS for the Columbia River Channel
22 Deepening Project. Since 1846, the Columbia River bar
23 pilots have been an integral part of the river highway
24 known as the Columbia River. The river is a key part of
25 the transportation infrastructure of the region and points

1 east. The Pacific Northwest economy is closely linked to
2 trade with the Pacific Rim as evidenced by Washington
3 being the most trade dependent state, with Oregon ranking
4 sixth in the nation. Thousands of businesses in our
5 region rely on the Columbia River system for international
6 and domestic trade. The Columbia draws its cargos from
7 many parts of Washington state, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and
8 other states in the Midwest as well. Importance of a more
9 competitive Columbia River system has far-ranging
10 ramifications.

11 We are now at another crossroads. In
12 order to maintain the competitiveness of the Columbia
13 River for all its commercial users, the channel must be
14 deepened to 43 feet as river infrastructure has exhausted
15 its nonstructural alternatives. Deepening will enable the
16 river to accommodate the larger fuel efficient ships that
17 increasingly dominate the world trade fleet. In our view,
18 not to deepen the river would erode the ability of the
19 Columbia River to offer competitive transportation to its
20 users. This would have a negative economic ripple effect
21 on the region that is nearly impossible to calculate.

22 Two illustrations come readily to
23 mind. First, some ships will find it not economically
24 feasible to call on Columbia River ports as they will not
25 be able to utilize their capacities. Indeed, this has

1 been happening to some extent now. For example, container
2 service is critical to our high value export-related
3 businesses. The reality of the main haul trade in the
4 Pacific Rim with our largest trading partners is that
5 we're serviced by ships between 3500 and 5,000 TEU
6 capacity, which are 900 plus feet long and have load
7 drafts between 42 and 46 feet. When the channel is
8 deepened, ships containing up to 6,000 TEU will be able to
9 call. Deepening will result in an estimated 20 percent
10 increase in capacity of many of the ships currently
11 calling and expand the numbers of those able to call.
12 This increase in capacity results in conservative per
13 container savings of 15 percent.

14 Similarly, the Pamex (phonetic) bulk
15 carriers that call on the Columbia River ports could be
16 loaded with another 6,000 tons or an increase of between
17 10 and 15 percent in capacity. This will reduce per ton
18 cost between 10 and 15 percent as well.

19 Currently, the 40-foot channel is
20 limiting our effectiveness to compete with the bulk cargos
21 in which we now have important market shares and is
22 limiting our ability to attract new cargos. Due to the
23 nature of the international charter market, which is a
24 very good example of supply and demand dynamics, if we can
25 make the river more economically productive for our

1 carriers, it should drive down current rates and make our
2 products more competitive in the international markets.
3 If we do not deepen the channel, as fewer ships call on
4 the Columbia River ports, the cost of not -- if doing so
5 would be spread out over fewer ships, thus making
6 alternative ports a more competitive option. Further,
7 newer ships, which are larger, would be unable to call.
8 And as aging vessels are taken out of service, there is a
9 real danger that the Columbia River will lose a great deal
10 of its service.

11 Obviously, of concern to us is the
12 protection of the environment and ecosystems. Our job is
13 to pilot ships in a safe, efficient, reliable manner.
14 Safety includes protection of the environment. We are not
15 experts in the types of environmental ecosystem
16 discussions which have surrounded this project. However,
17 we support all efforts that would resolve all outstanding
18 environment and ecosystem issues, many of which have been
19 resolved in this long process. It appears that by law,
20 the cost/benefit study conducted by the Corps is
21 conservative in both costs and benefits. For example, it
22 does not take into consideration a multi-Corps analysis.
23 Among other things, such a study takes into account the
24 additional costs a river shipper -- a current shipper
25 would incur if the shipper did not have access to the

1 Columbia River. These benefits are not in the current
2 cost/benefit study done by the Corps.

3 In summary, we view the channel
4 deepening project as critical to the continuing viability
5 of large scale maritime commerce on the river which
6 enables shippers and importers to get their goods to
7 market in a manner which allows them to be competitive. I
8 urge you to finalize this supplemental report and grant
9 the pending regulatory permits and record a decision to
10 move this important project to completion.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Banks.

13 Mr. Holte and then Mr. Westerholm and
14 then Mr. Wyatt.

15 MR. HOLTE: Excuse me. Pardon me.

16 I've got a cold.

17 My name is Bruce Holte, H-o-l-t-e.

18 I'm President of the International Longshore Warehouse
19 Union, Local 8, in Portland, Oregon.

20 Thank you for providing this chance
21 for public comments on the Draft Supplemental Feasibility
22 Report and EIS for the Columbia River Channel Deepening
23 Project, which is vitally important to the economics and
24 environmental health of our region. At the completion of
25 the biological opinion by the National Marine Fisheries

1 Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the
2 completion of this draft supplemental report, it is clear
3 that the project can and should move forward -- should
4 move forward to benefit the Columbia River's economy and
5 environment.

6 The channel deepening is important for
7 our economy. We must deepen the Columbia River
8 navigational channel from 40 to 43 feet to maintain the
9 vitality of this transportation route in our region's
10 trade based economics, especially during these difficult
11 economic times. Deepening the channel is critical to
12 transportation of the 14 billion in annual maritime cargo
13 and the sustaining businesses, farms and jobs in our
14 region. Deepening the channel will ensure that the
15 Columbia River can accommodate the larger fuel efficient
16 ships that increasingly dominate the world trade fleet.
17 This project has broad base support from businesses, labor
18 unions, farmers, ports and communities throughout the
19 Northwest. Over 40,000 local family wage jobs are
20 dependent on and another 59,000 Northwest jobs are
21 possibly influenced by Columbia maritime commerce. Please
22 state that in the note, 40,000 local families and 59,000
23 local jobs. Over 1,000 businesses rely on the Columbia to
24 transport products around the world. The vitality of
25 these jobs and businesses require cost effective maritime

1 transportation. Without a deeper channel, the farmers and
2 land businesses will be damaged and jobs lost.

3 As the supplemental report estimates,
4 the benefit to cost ratio for the project is strong with
5 18.3 million in annual national transportation savings. I
6 believe the estimate is one point -- the estimate of 1.46
7 benefit for the -- for every dollar in construction cost
8 required is quite conservative. The economic benefits are
9 large and diverse, rural, urban, east and west, Oregon and
10 Washington, throughout our entire region.

11 The Columbia River maritime commerce
12 provides \$208 million in state and local taxes that
13 benefits communities throughout our region. The channel
14 deepening is also important for our environment. This
15 project will require dredging just 54 percent of the
16 navigational channel or only 3.5 percent of the total
17 Columbia River between the mouth of Portland-Vancouver.
18 The remaining areas of the channel are already naturally
19 deeper than 43 feet.

20 An independent scientific panel was
21 convened last year to review the endangered questions.
22 The panel concluded that the deepening project will have
23 no -- will have no measurable negative effects on -- on
24 threatened and endangered fish in the river. The
25 biological opinion issued by the National Marine Fisheries

1 and U.S. Fish and Wildlife also demonstrate the
2 environmental protections and benefits of this projects.

3 The channel deepening project will
4 benefit our economy and our environment. I urge you to
5 finalize the supplemental report and grant the pending
6 regulatory permits and record of decision to move this
7 important project to completion.

8 Thank you very much.

9 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Holte.

10 Mr. Westerholm, Mr. Wyatt and -- Mr.
11 Sundit? Is that correct, Mr. Sundit?

12 MR. SUNDIT: Yes.

13 MR. WIGGINS: Please, next.

14 MR. WESTERHOLM: Thank you Colonel and
15 project manager.

16 Well, here we are again. How many
17 times are we going to go through this process? There is a
18 better way, you know. It is called communication and
19 working together. All factions up and down the river are
20 given equal importance and representation, we would have
21 had this problem solved a long time ago.

22 What are we doing here? It is
23 important that mid and lower river activities be given
24 consideration. We are not all tied directly to the urban
25 area, although we realize, of course, its importance.

1 When is big big enough? When is deep deep enough?
2 Compromise can maintain the present infrastructure of our
3 Columbia River commerce system without destroying the
4 natural river and fish and wildlife any more than we
5 already have.

6 Are we going to leave something for
7 the future that is still wild and not completely changed
8 by man? The amended EIS on channel study does nothing to
9 add confidence to river people that we are being
10 considered. Let's give salmon and salmon people on the
11 Columbia River from Astoria to Portland, and don't forget
12 the mouth of the river as well, more reflection on this
13 critical issue. In its present form, the feasibility
14 report and the Environmental Impact Statement, I feel,
15 should be rejected.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr.

18 Westerholm.

19 Mr. Wyatt, Mr. Sundit and then Ms.

20 Manarino.

21 MS. MANARINO: Manarino. MR.

22 WIGGINS: Manarino.

23 MR. WYATT: Colonel, thank you very
24 much. My name is Bill Wyatt, W-y-a-t-t. I represent the
25 Port of Portland.

1 Thank you very much for the
2 opportunity to speak this evening about the draft
3 supplemental environmental impact statement on the
4 deepening of the Columbia River channel from 40 to 43
5 feet. This evening I'm speaking for the Port of Portland,
6 one of the six port authorities which support this
7 project. This is, indeed, a project which enjoys broad
8 regional support and which will benefit businesses,
9 farmers, ranchers and workers throughout the Northwest.
10 In my remarks this evening, I want to cover specifically
11 three areas. First, why should we do this project at all;
12 second, who will benefit; and, third, how to deal with
13 environmental impacts.

14 To anyone who has followed this
15 project, it does not come as a surprise that we have faced
16 the prospect of deepening the channel before. In fact,
17 the Port of Portland came into being in 1891 specifically
18 to create and maintain a 25-foot navigation channel. The
19 last time we deepened the channel was in the mid -- or,
20 rather, in the early 1970's when we deepened it from 35
21 feet to 40 feet. Then, as now, we deepened the channel
22 because we had to keep pace with the changing market and
23 technology of maritime commerce.

24 What if we hadn't? What if we decided
25 in the nation and the region that the expense was too

1 great, the return uncertain and the risk too large? What
2 if the channel remains at 40 feet instead of 43? We can't
3 predict the future, but the past, they say, is prologue.
4 If we had left the channel at 35 feet, it is likely there
5 would be no container service on the Columbia River and
6 anyone wanting to ship via container, whether it be French
7 fries or tennis shoes, would be shipping through Puget
8 Sound paying higher rates, creating more traffic and more
9 pollution. The river system would still have a lease but,
10 most likely, only the smaller vessels which still serve
11 Japan, which is about a third of the current export
12 business. Corn, soy beans, sorgum and barley likely would
13 not be coming down the Columbia at all but would be moving
14 through the Great Lakes and Gulf ports making products
15 produced in Eastern Oregon and Washington even more
16 expensive than they presently are. And, more importantly,
17 without the large volumes of boat cargo, such as wheat,
18 soda ash and pot ash, it's difficult to believe that the
19 railroads would have invested as much as they did in
20 regional rail capacity that is a benefit to all the
21 businesses in the region.

22 I make these points today because the
23 Corps is constrained in how they go about calculating
24 economic benefits. The Corps must look only at national
25 economic benefits and you must make assumptions based on

1 existing businesses, not what might happen in the future
2 and not based on the long-term consequences of leaving the
3 channel at its current depth. But we in the business of
4 international trade must necessarily view this project in
5 another light. Can we maintain affordable access to
6 international markets for regional shippers without
7 deepening the channel? The answer is a resounding no.
8 The maritime industry is moving to larger and larger
9 ships. We either accommodate that and maintain an
10 economically competitive service or accept a slow but
11 certainly decline in the availability and affordability of
12 access to international markets.

13 Secondly, let me touch on two
14 benefits. Certainly, the national economy benefits, but
15 here in the Northwest, all parts of our region benefit as
16 well. The Columbia basin benefits from a competitive
17 wheat business. The Willamette Valley benefits from an
18 agricultural sector with access to international markets.
19 The metropolitan economy benefits from the ability to
20 export finished goods. And the communities up and down
21 the river benefit from port jobs and from the businesses
22 that are served by deep draft ships such as U.S. Gypsum in
23 St. Helens. It's worth it to review the numbers. \$14
24 billion worth of goods flow up and down the Columbia River
25 each year. 40,000 jobs regionally depend on the maritime

1 industry, some of them here in Astoria. More than 1,000
2 companies rely on the Columbia River to transport their
3 goods. As good as those numbers are, they will grow if we
4 remain competitive.

5 Finally, let me touch upon the
6 environmental aspects of this project. The project will
7 ensure best management practices are used to minimize any
8 impacts to threatened or endangered species during
9 construction. The project will incorporate monitoring and
10 research components to contribute further information
11 toward the recovery of the endangered species in the
12 Columbia River. Adaptive management will be used to
13 provide flexibility in the management of the project and
14 to make modifications, if needed. And the project will go
15 above and beyond mere mitigation of its impacts to
16 actually restore and improve habitat all along the river,
17 but especially here in the Columbia River estuary.
18 Oregonians rightfully set a high bar when it comes to
19 making sure their public dollars are well spent and that
20 the environment is preserved. People demand that we not
21 put the environment at risk and this project doesn't.
22 People demand that it deliver value to the region's
23 taxpayers and it will. And, finally, we demand the
24 project of this river benefits not just to one industry or
25 one region but to a broad range of people and places.

1 Nothing we have seen or heard in the lengthy analysis of
2 this project changes that one key conclusion.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Wyatt.

5 Mr. Sundit, Miss Manarino and Mr.
6 Fratt will be third, please.

7 MR. SUNDIT: Colonel, my name is Lee
8 Sundit and I'm an officer with Longshore Local 8 in
9 Portland. And we represent about 650 longshoremen in the
10 Portland area. I'm also speaking for approximately 1500
11 longshoremen that work on the Columbia River here both on
12 the Washington side as well as the Oregon side. We
13 appreciate all the work that's been done. It's been a
14 long, long arduous road and we believe that where we are
15 right now is where we need to be. We think we satisfied
16 the environmental needs that need to be satisfied and we
17 -- we believe we should go forward with the report and
18 let's get on with dredging the river, so to speak.

19 In the last three years, I've also
20 served on our technology committee at the international
21 level. And that technology committee -- what we've done
22 over the three years is we've really studied shipping and
23 the impact that the future has with respect to the overall
24 industry. We collected data. We listened to -- we've
25 employed consulting firms who work in the industry of

1 terminal construction and vessel construction and listed
2 their forecast. And I'm here to say that the steamship
3 industry or ships drive the capital side or the terminal
4 side of the market. It's not the terminal side that
5 drives the ships. What we're seeing in the industry is
6 that for cotton and steel purposes, the vessels are
7 getting larger and larger. The shipping companies are
8 consolidating and they're merging and sharing space.
9 There's fewer and fewer -- what's happening is that, as a
10 consequence of that, the small ships over time are being
11 phased out.

12 Now, in Portland right now we have
13 three major steamship companies who call Portland. There
14 are a number of other steamship companies that do not call
15 Portland. If you're a shipper in Oregon or Washington or
16 along the Columbia River, you have an option -- because of
17 the competition involved, you have an option to ship out
18 of Portland or you have an option to ship, say, out of
19 Tacoma, Seattle or Oakland. Right now the transportation
20 to Seattle, Tacoma, Oakland is subsidized by the steamship
21 industry and it's subsidized because there is competition.
22 Now, if that competition were to dry up because the larger
23 vessels would be unable to call Portland, the steamship
24 people don't care. If they can't call Portland, they're
25 not going to build smaller ships to call Portland. They

1 will call -- dry up and take away the container business.
2 And what will happen is that somebody is going to go away.
3 The steamship people will not subsidize the cargo if they
4 don't have to subsidize the cargo. So the cost of doing
5 business in our area will increase, if that is the case.
6 Dredging is absolutely essential to make room for what's
7 happening in the steamship business relative to the size
8 of the ships. If we don't do it and you want to start a
9 business in Oregon, you want to maintain access to the
10 export market, you're not going to be able to be
11 competitive in business in Oregon or Washington or along
12 the Columbia River.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Sundit.

15 Miss Manarino, Mr. Fratt and Mr.

16 Burton will be next.

17 MS. MANARINO: Colonel, members of the
18 panel, thank you for the opportunity to hear comments from
19 the public.

20 My comments concern this project as a
21 taxpayer and the benefits to taxpayers. I'm very
22 concerned that the benefits of this dredging project have
23 been overstated. There was a congressional general
24 accounting office report recently on a similar project in
25 the Delaware River, 100 miles of dredging, and -- and the

1 report stated that the Corps overstated the annual benefit
2 by 67 percent. Actual benefits would be about \$13 million
3 less or less than half the cost of the annualized
4 dredging. This -- this was due to using things like
5 counting ships that were light loaded and could use the --
6 the channel as it was as though they had to be heavier
7 loaded and so that was the benefit. The "Oregonian"
8 stated in March that their analysis of this project would
9 yield 88 cents for every dollar spent. This -- this
10 doesn't seem to be of benefit to the taxpayers. The
11 shipping lines that -- that would benefit from this are
12 exempt from U.S. antitrust laws. They need to set rates.
13 There's no guarantee that if they can ship fuller, fewer
14 ships and realize a savings, that they will pass this on
15 to Oregon farmers, Washington farmers, Oregon exporters.
16 U.S. taxpayers would pay for the deepening of the river,
17 but the benefits are likely to go mostly to foreign
18 shipping corporations.

19 My other concern is that there's
20 already a fair amount of pollution in the Columbia River.
21 As a fish consumer, someone whose husband fishes, who
22 brings home fish, sturgeon, these fish are already under
23 an advisory. The Washington and Oregon health departments
24 in 1960 -- 1996 advised people to remove skin and fat
25 before eating white sturgeon caught in the Columbia River

1 because of the levels of PCB contamination. These PCB's
2 sink down. They're in the sediments. And dredging is
3 likely to stir them up, make them more available to fish
4 in the river. This doesn't mean that there won't be
5 sturgeon, but it may mean that the sturgeon are not
6 healthy to eat. And so those are among my reasons for my
7 opposition to this project.

8 Thank you very much.

9 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Miss
10 Manarino.

11 Mr. Fratt, Mr. Burton and Mr. Forey.

12 MR. FRATT: Colonel Hobernicht,
13 Project Manager Hicks and distinguished facilitator, my
14 name is John Fratt, F-r-a-t-t. I represent Port of
15 Vancouver, Washington, USA.

16 I have submitted -- my port has
17 submitted written testimony and I will not read that to
18 you here. I'll give you some observations, though.

19 On August 16th, 2002, the Adriatica
20 Graeca, a new ship designed for the grain trade, called at
21 the Port of Vancouver, USA. They loaded nearly 57,000
22 tons of grain, wheat. And I note for you that I wear an
23 Oregon wheat shirt, although I'm a Washingtonian because
24 wheat from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana come down
25 the river to our two ports, to our three ports, to our

1 four ports. It comes down to our area and this is the
2 foundation upon which we base our marine trade. This
3 magnificent river with a 40-foot channel -- 40 feet is,
4 roughly, this ceiling three times to give you an idea.
5 This magnificent channel has allowed us to help the United
6 States government in its balance of trade problem, but
7 most of all, it helps the farmers, the grain growers.

8 Some facts for you. The number one
9 state in tonnage put through the state of Washington is
10 Nebraska. We, in the Pacific Northwest, are reaching into
11 the interland and we're doing it because this river, this
12 magnificent river, has a 40-foot channel, you know, three
13 times what this ceiling is. And what we're asking to do
14 is deepen that river by three feet, the existing channel.
15 We aren't dredging a new channel. We aren't proposing
16 that we do that. We are dredging the existing channel
17 three feet. And that's Columbia River sand. Out there in
18 that channel, that sand is course grain fine material.
19 It's not the fine that you get in the slick areas where
20 there might be contamination.

21 This is not a difficult project,
22 although I've been working on it actually since 1986,
23 before I met Laura Hicks. I've been working on this with
24 the ports to think through this, what is the best way to
25 go. We determined that three feet was what we needed.

1 The ship that called at the Port of
2 Vancouver left an additional 6,000 tons on the dock. That
3 was tonnage that could have gone on if we had a 43-foot
4 channel. In point of fact, in a commodity flow forecast
5 we're having what's called by the economists leakage.
6 We're losing products to British Columbia, to other areas.
7 We no longer have them in our market share. This is
8 something that needs to be done.

9 I have one minute left. I would like
10 you all to enjoy that minute going home earlier. I thank
11 you very much. The Port of Vancouver thanks you.

12 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Fratt.

13 Mr. Burton, Mr. Forey and Mr. -- is it
14 Weiss, W -- Paul --

15 MR. VIK: Vik.

16 MR. WIGGINS: Say it again, please.

17 MR. VIK: Vik, V-i-k.

18 MR. WIGGINS: Vik. Thank you very
19 much.

20 MR. BURTON: Colonel, staff and for
21 all of you, I would like to say thanks for allowing me to
22 speak. My name is Mike Burton. I am the Assistant
23 Director of the Oregon Economic and Community Development
24 Department. One of my roles is central policy development
25 and administration to ports. And in that role, I'm here

1 to speak to you about the Department's involvement related
2 to the channel deepening project.

3 The Department has been observing the
4 project since the beginning. I've been involved since
5 '99. The Department supports the project. The Department
6 supports particularly the cost/benefit analysis and our
7 understanding of the Supplemental Environmental Impact
8 Statement. The Department believes that if the
9 cost/benefit analysis is in error, it's in error
10 conservatively. Since this and the previous cost/benefit
11 analysis, although appear to look better, are both
12 snapshots in time. Between those two cost/benefit
13 analyses -- and I'm particularly speaking to the benefit
14 side of the equation -- I believe the benefit side is
15 understated because in between those two are two shipping
16 companies that announced their intent for -- and one did
17 pull out of shipping through the Columbia system. After
18 the second cost/benefit analysis was conducted, one of
19 those lines announced they will continue to serve the
20 Columbia market.

21 Additionally, the State feels that the
22 Corps could look at state benefits. That's of much
23 interest to us as well as the national benefit. I
24 understand that you can't, but the State believes that
25 there are benefits that aren't shown -- don't show in the

1 cost/benefit analysis that the State values. The State
2 supports the project for reasons you've all heard already.
3 I will submit my testimony in writing. I'm not going to
4 touch on most of those points. I would like to just cut
5 to the chase and say that for the reasons you've heard the
6 Department believes that without deepening the channel,
7 trade on the Columbia River is threatened, is likely to
8 diminish. That will have impacts on Oregon producers, the
9 Oregon economy and all of us as consumers because costs
10 will rise. We believe that it's in the interest of the
11 state of Oregon to see that the project commence and I
12 support you and your report in that effort.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Burton.

15 Mr. Forey, please, and then Mr. Vik
16 and Mr. Duyck. Is that correct? D-u-y-c-k.

17 MR. FOREY: I'm BJ Forey. I'm a land
18 owner on Puget Island at about mile 40 of the Columbia
19 River.

20 While I'm not totally against the
21 dredging deeper of the river, we need mitigation to the
22 erosion that continues. And we're feared that deepening
23 would only increase our amount of erosion and we need the
24 Corps and the State and the ports to help slow this down
25 since it benefits the ports to have a deeper channel. But

1 those of us who are property owners, are we to go away and
2 fall into the river for the ports or can they support us?
3 We have problems at mile 43 and we have problems at mile
4 40 and we have mile -- problems at mile 37 where we need
5 the help of the Corps of Engineers and the port on the
6 river.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Forey.

9 Mr. Vik and then Mr. Duyck and then
10 Mr. Beasley, please.

11 MR. VIK: My name is Paul Vik, last
12 name V-i-k, and I'm from Puget Island. I own waterfront
13 property, what used to be the beach nurseman side of mile
14 43.8. And I also own a little bit of the land that -- 200
15 acres that are slated for where you have your eye on for
16 an upland disposal site on Puget Island. And my initial
17 thought was that I wouldn't speak tonight. I started
18 attending meetings about this issue in January of '97 and
19 there are lots of people in this room who I know what I'm
20 whining about and they've heard it all, but I've been kind
21 of the lead loud mouth in this issue and people from Puget
22 Island -- there's people here from Puget Island. I got a
23 reputation to uphold, so --

24 I can make a good speech when I'm
25 upset. And I'm not upset anymore. I'm just kind of

1 disappointed, but -- I'm not abandoning my position, but
2 you asked what we thought back in '97. You had round
3 tables and hearings and comment periods. And over the
4 years, I've seen damage from ship wakes and both
5 catastrophic and daily wear and tear and the problems with
6 getting compensated for that sort of thing. Now, there's
7 4,000 ship calls a year above Puget Island at this time
8 and each one does 10 cents worth of damage as it drove by
9 there. If 2,000 ships go by twice, that's 4,000. You
10 have \$400 worth of damage a year. And how do you collect
11 that? They say we have to collect from the ship owner.
12 And how do you collect that? There's no way to do that.
13 And I look upon it as government subsidized hit and run.

14 Now, I have a little scenario here
15 that I think should be considered. I don't mean this as a
16 threat or a promise or anything, but you asked the river
17 pilot do you do -- why do you have to do 17 knots past
18 Puget Island, he will explain about hydrodynamic
19 characteristics and ship handling don't handle good at
20 slow speeds and so forth and I understand that. And there
21 may be pilots here who object to the 17 knot figure. But
22 as a kid, my dad had a Columbia River bow kicker much like
23 this one across the road over here that's selling fish and
24 chips. I'd run it between jetties. I timed it carefully
25 and I know it went 17 knots and, in those days, there were

1 ships I couldn't keep up with. And, incidentally, I made
2 that test one summer when my dad was in Alaska.

3 And now, then, if you asked him,
4 "Well, do you go 17 knots up the Willamette River?"

5 And they say, "Of course not."

6 "Well, why not?"

7 "Well, we're in a harbor."

8 "Well, how do you control it, then, if
9 you have control of the harbor?"

10 And they say, "We have tugs alongside
11 it."

12 Well, now, in light of the Rich
13 Passage Decision in the Washington State ferries, which
14 went in favor of the land owners, I'm afraid that if
15 something isn't done to compensate or repair the damage --
16 and in Puget Island, we are looking for beach nourishment
17 like you used to do. And not every year, but maybe every
18 five, six, eight, ten years -- somebody is going to go to
19 court and they're going to ask "Where does the harbor
20 start? Is there a legal definition of a harbor?" And it
21 might just happen that they rule that the harbor starts at
22 McKenzie Point (phonetic) and you start the tugs alongside
23 from down there. Now, I don't want that and I am not
24 really against the channel and I'm not insisting that the
25 ships even slow down at Puget Island. I just want the

1 damage repaired, so the beach nourishment will go along
2 way to placating my concerns on that. We have one man
3 here who spent a lot of money on -- he's here tonight. He
4 spent a lot of money on a sheet pile bulkhead. And
5 there's pilots here. You know where that is. And he used
6 to have sand rebuilt there every so often and it wasn't a
7 problem. Today the erosion is a major problem. So this
8 is what we're asking for.

9 We thought when the channel -- we
10 heard about this deeper channel, we thought "Oh, boy, now
11 we'll get it because -- get sand because they'll have to
12 have a place to put it." We found out there's no plans
13 for it. We hear that the NMFS doesn't approve of it. We
14 hear that it's expensive because it doesn't stay there and
15 it erodes away. We hear that they can't do anything on
16 private property, those kind of things. And so for
17 whatever reason, if we don't get -- get the problem taken
18 care of, I'm afraid somebody is going to take this to
19 court and I'm just wondering if you're prepared for that.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. WIGGINS: Thanks, Mr. Vik.

22 Mr. Duyck, Mr. Beasley and then Ms.
23 Caplan.

24 MS. CAPLAN: I'm not going to speak.
25 I'm Ms. Caplan.

1 MR. WIGGINS: Okay.

2 MR. DUYCK: My name is Tom Duyck. I'm
3 a farmer in the Willamette Valley here and I'm
4 representing the Oregon Wheat Growers League tonight.
5 Thank you, Colonel and everybody else for giving us the
6 opportunity to testify.

7 You must deepen the Columbia River
8 navigation channel 43 feet to keep the viability of our
9 transportation route of the region, the trade based
10 economy, especially during these difficult times. Over 40
11 percent of the grain that's exported in the U.S. is
12 currently going through the Columbia River channel or the
13 Port of Portland or Washington or Columbia River channel.
14 The deepening of the channel is critical. It creates, as
15 previous people testified, 14 billion in annual maritime
16 cargo that's being shipped here, so it's a viable trade
17 deficit that we have presently going on.

18 The project has broad base support
19 from businesses and labor unions, farmers, ports.
20 Everyone in the Northwest will benefit from the deepening
21 of the project. Viability of these jobs and businesses
22 require cost prospective maritime transportation. Farmers
23 and businesses will be damaged and jobs lost if we don't
24 make the channel deeper. You'll have less ships calling
25 the port because of that or, as previous persons

1 testified, that we'll have -- they won't be able to load
2 them or short loaded ships are going on now. Northwest
3 businesses and farms will have a regional economic
4 disadvantage if the project is not completed. It cannot
5 compete with the other ports. Economic benefits are large
6 and diverse. If we deepen it, rural and urban, east and
7 west, Oregon and Washington and throughout the region will
8 benefit, including Idaho, Montana, Colorado. Nebraska is
9 shipping stuff here now through the economic benefits of
10 the Pacific Rim, which is a major customer of things.
11 There's so much coming down the Lewiston with barge
12 traffic and rail and the Columbia River ports.

13 The project only requires dredging 54
14 percent of the navigation channel. The remainder of the
15 channel is already over 43 feet deep. The supplemental
16 reports on the project extensive environmental review is
17 important for mitigating both environmental impact and to
18 ensure that the river is better off than it is before.
19 Being in the ag. and natural resource industry, we try to
20 make our lands better than it was when we took it over to
21 try to improve it and try to improve the way of life,
22 because if we don't protect our land and the environment,
23 why -- the ag. and natural resource industry, why we
24 cannot make a viable living without protecting it, so
25 we're stewards of the land here and trying to protect the

1 ecosystem that's going on.

2 As they stated here, the estuaries of
3 the Columbia River -- they're trying to protect the
4 ecosystem and enhance it as they enhance the channel
5 deepening project. Significant to report is the
6 beneficial use of plain sands birch on the Columbia River
7 and the work to protect the crab and other ocean habitats
8 and the report demonstrates how the goal can be achieved.

9 The channel deepening project will
10 benefit our economy and the environment. With that, why
11 we try to keep erosion and the land, use stuff while they
12 work with the people or land owners to try to protect the
13 erosion on their land along the river as we try to protect
14 the erosion on the lands along small streams in the ag.
15 and natural resource industry.

16 We urge you to finalize this
17 supplemental report and grant pending regulations, permits
18 and record of decisions to move this important project to
19 completion.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. WIGGINS: Mr. Duyck.

22 Mr. Beasley.

23 MR. BEASLEY: Good evening, ladies and
24 gentlemen. My name is Dale Beasley, B-e-a-s-l-e-y. I
25 represent the Columbia River Crab Fishermen's Association.

1 This evening I've heard a lot about
2 the economic benefits that this channel deepening would
3 bring to the region. And I would hate to see these
4 economic benefits denied these folks, but I'm also here to
5 remind you that there are some negative aspects to this
6 deepening and those negative aspects happen to be of my
7 industry, the crab fishing industry. And I've never
8 brought this up in public testimony before, but I think I
9 will tonight. I just decided to do it tonight after
10 listening to Mr. Vik when he says, "We've got subsidized
11 hit and run here." Our industry is going to face a little
12 bit of this subsidized hit and run also. But we've got
13 one hammer that Mr. Vik doesn't have. And I've never
14 reminded anybody of this ever in all of the years that
15 this has been going on. And there has to be some State
16 matching fund money to this channel deepening for it to go
17 ahead. And the Washington State legislature on three or
18 four separate occasions has put some encumbering language
19 on these funds and said they can spend that money when the
20 crab industry is protected. And I'm going to remind you
21 here tonight as the crab industry, I don't think we've
22 been protected. I look at this SEIS related to ocean
23 disposal and I don't see any difference in the FEIS. This
24 SEIS related to ocean disposal is a discredit to the
25 public process to the point of almost being scandalous.

1 We haven't addressed the problems to our industry. The
2 responsible public and agency concerns have not been
3 addressed. We've been brought up in the FEIS. We've
4 submitted our comments. All you have to do is go back and
5 read it. We've submitted at least 100 and some pages
6 total of comments. They're applicable to this FEIS.

7 In response -- in 2000, the Corps and
8 EPA received numerous response requests for an SEIS on
9 ocean disposal. In June of 2000, a couple of friends of
10 mine gave me a letter they got back from the Corps. Their
11 name is Fred and Nancy Holm. They're owners of a local
12 eating establishment. And they said that the ocean
13 disposal -- the Corps told these folks, just ordinary
14 members of the public, that the task force was currently
15 reviewing all of the ocean disposal issues and the final
16 decisions on the ocean site will incorporate the concerns
17 of that group. Fred and Nancy are still waiting for that
18 review. That letter was dated June 8th, 2000.

19 In this report, the public has been
20 grossly misled and this needs to be corrected. Public
21 health and safety issues at Site E are still not resolved.
22 We have excessive wave amplification on the 10 percent
23 agreement in the last two or three years in the interim
24 expansion of Site E. And I think we're at that point
25 again this year. I haven't had a change to analyze it,

1 but as I come across this just this morning, I was between
2 buoy seven and buoy three and I looked at my bathometer
3 and it said 42 feet. And I says, "It's supposed to be 42
4 feet here." So I took my GPS I had if I'm going to be
5 checking this and I said, "If there is a discrepancy in
6 the chart I have today, I'll be going back out to put down
7 a string with a weight and I'll put it down." I'll
8 measure the string and weight so there won't be any
9 discrepancy on the 42-foot depth.

10 We have some adverse impacts to
11 commercial resources that are going to be caused by this
12 subsidized hit and run and these have not been properly
13 evaluated. We don't know how many crabs are at the deep
14 water site. We don't know how many crabs used to be at
15 Site E. We don't know what's going to happen there when
16 we start dumping on this ocean disposal site. And until
17 we start finding this out, the crab industry is not going
18 to be protected as the Washington State legislature
19 requested in the expenditure of those funds. And we've
20 had quite a bit of time to start dealing with this. The
21 "M" word hasn't been addressed. In fact, we've been
22 called daily to discuss it, the "M" word. That's
23 mitigation for those damages to curb our resources.

24 There is some positive coming, though,
25 that I see on the horizon. Thanks to the Washington

1 coastal communities and the up river Washington coast,
2 we're starting to look at some alternate beneficial use
3 for the part in MCR7. This last year we had the Benson
4 Beach project that was highly successful by Netco
5 (phonetic), a dredging company, and I'd really like to
6 thank those people who worked long and hard to make sure
7 that that happened. And I would like --

8 MR. WIGGINS: Mr. Beasley, I hate to
9 say this -- MR. BEASLEY: Please
10 conclude. I'll just make it short.

11 In short, this SEIS related to ocean
12 disposal is S-O-S, same old stuff, not even repackaged.
13 All the Corps and the EPA things in this information
14 material in this present package baffles me. I heard a
15 rumor that this ocean study could even bolster some crab,
16 but they cannot legitimize this public process because the
17 deadline is September 15th and those studies aren't done
18 yet.

19 MR. WIGGINS: Mr. Beasley --

20 MR. BEASLEY: I'll get drummed out. I
21 only had one more sentence.

22 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, sir.

23 The next on the list are Ms.
24 McDonnough followed by Mr. Whiting and Mr. Van Ess. Ms.
25 McDonnough.

1 MS. McDONNOUGH: My name is Christi
2 McDonnough, M-c-D-o-n-n-o-u-g-h. I'm the coastal planner
3 at CREST, the Columbia River Estuary Study Task Force.
4 CREST is a local by state council of governments and we
5 represent local jurisdictions, including the cities,
6 counties and ports down the Columbia River estuary in both
7 Oregon and Washington.

8 This project as proposed in the
9 supplemental EIS does not leave the estuary ecosystem
10 better than before. In fact, the project results in the
11 continued impacts and additional degradation to the
12 estuarine and near shore ocean environment. The final
13 SEIS emphasized the use of previously existing estuary
14 dredge material disposal sites. The disposal plan
15 presented in the supplemental EIS labels estuary dump
16 sites as restoration and fails to address long-term
17 protection of ocean resources, particularly Dungeness
18 crab. The bottom line is we have a serious math problem
19 when it comes to dredging and disposal. The current
20 dredging and disposal situation on the Columbia River has
21 left us in a position where we don't have sufficient
22 capacity or acceptable disposal locations for the dredge
23 material necessary for the maintenance of the existing
24 channel, not to mention the additional material that is
25 supposed to be dredged and disposed during the channel

1 deepening.

2 The MCR maintenance project faces
3 similar challenges, not enough acceptable places to put
4 the dredge material. As well, ocean disposal has not been
5 eliminated. In the context of existing dredging practices
6 on the Columbia, ocean disposal is still the preferred
7 alternative for MCR maintenance material. The
8 supplemental EIS is merely delaying the ocean disposal
9 problem and at the same time creating new problems in the
10 estuary. Section 4 of the SEIS contains a map of the
11 proposed disposal sites and this includes the deep water
12 site.

13 CREST has recently completed an update
14 to the Columbia River estuary dredge material management
15 plan. And based on our research, we learned that Rice
16 Island and Site E are the largest dredge disposal sites in
17 the history of dredging on the Columbia. Furthermore,
18 Rice Island is reaching capacity and Site E has its own
19 suite of environmental, economic and safety issues that
20 must be addressed for continued use. The Corps has no
21 long-term solution for these problems. We are running out
22 of room. The result is that the supplemental EIS proposes
23 to use additional estuary dump sites that have not been
24 previously used for disposal. The Corps is labeling these
25 dumping grounds to be typical for restoration.

1 CREST has been working with the ports,
2 the Corps, state agencies, other stakeholders and both
3 governors' offices on expanding the concept of beneficial
4 use of dredge material. This is a concept that everyone
5 supports and we appreciate the hard work that it has taken
6 to get projects like Benson Beach and residents off the
7 ground this summer. We have much more to do. There are
8 many more beneficial use opportunities on the river that
9 must be incorporated into long-term implementation of
10 disposal practices. Currently, we do not have long-term
11 funding or plans for these types of projects. Without
12 these, our math problems will be exacerbated.

13 CREST also supports the concept of
14 using dredge material for the purpose of restoring
15 habitat. Unfortunately, the two projects presented that
16 involve dumping and that are labeled restoration will
17 result in permanent alteration and further degradation of
18 the estuary. CREST has stated in several forms that the
19 use of dredge material for restoration needs further
20 exploration on an experimental basis with a strong
21 monitoring component similar to Benson Beach. Millions of
22 cubic yards dumped over the first two years of
23 construction at Lois Inlet Island embayment is not
24 experimental and is not restoring valuable habitat.
25 Likewise, the placement of a public field at North Port

1 (phonetic) is not restoring valuable habitat. In fact, by
2 creating shallow water, the Corps is proposing to create
3 the one habitat type that is actually grown over the past
4 century. We have over 4,000 acres more shallow water than
5 we had historically in the estuary.

6 In summary, there are other options
7 available for the disposal of dredge material than those
8 proposed in the SEIS. We need to move beyond channel
9 deepening and work together for beneficial use of our
10 estuary.

11 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Ms.
12 McDonnough.

13 We have completed 14 public comments.
14 We have about eight remaining. I would propose that we
15 take a 10-minute break and come back.

16 For those of you who are interested in
17 giving public comment and have not signed up, I would
18 certainly encourage you to do that. And the list, if
19 you're interested, will be right up here at the front
20 table. My watch says 25 minutes to 8:00. If we can be
21 back at a quarter to 8:00, please.

22 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

23 MR. WIGGINS: Okay, folks. Could we
24 get back together again, please.

25 Our first speaker will be Mr. Allen

1 Whiting, followed by Mr. Van Ess, followed by Mr. Warren,
2 please.

3 MR. WHITING: Good evening. My name
4 is Allen Whiting and these are comments that I've talked
5 to before for your listening pleasure.

6 I'm the Western Coordinator for the
7 Columbia River Estuary Study Task Force. My job is to
8 evaluate the potential ecosystem restoration projects of
9 the lower river and the Columbia estuary. CREST is
10 working closely with watershed councils, local community
11 groups and agencies to implement projects on the ground to
12 restore historic habitat areas in the estuary. My
13 comments will focus on ecosystem restoration components of
14 the Columbia River Channel Improvement Project. To that
15 end, I bring the following concerns about each of the
16 proposed restoration projects that are described in the
17 SEIS.

18 I'll start first with the Shillapoo
19 Lake project. The Shillapoo Lake proposal provides no
20 discernible benefits to the native species. The basis of
21 the Shillapoo Lake project is to hydrologically remove any
22 connection between Shillapoo Lake and the Columbia River
23 thereby providing benefits to the river and ecosystem that
24 would be impacted through the deepening project.

25 Second, my comments specific to the

1 Miller-Pillar and Lois Inlet Island embayment. The Lois
2 Island embayment restoration feature proposes to restore
3 357 acres of shallow water habitat through the placement
4 of millions of cubic yards of dredge material.
5 Miller-Pillar involves the placement of 10 million cubic
6 yards of dredge material between a new pile dike field and
7 a highly erosive area near the navigation channel also to
8 create shallow water habitat. Current restoration
9 planning in the Columbia emphasizes passive approaches and
10 restoring needed historic habitat types allowing natural
11 processes to restore habitat. The concern we have is the
12 large degree of uncertainty going into these restoration
13 projects, especially at the scale proposed. Both projects
14 are creating habitat ties that are in excess reported by
15 historical data compiled by CREST. The goal of retaining
16 lost historical habitat types like tidal marsh and swamp
17 through dredge material disposal warrants caution. This
18 may be done with few test plots with a vigorous monitoring
19 design improvement. The monitoring results would help
20 indicate the relative benefit of dredge material disposal
21 and habitat creation. Unfortunately, both of these
22 projects as proposed are too large and provide little to
23 further our knowledge of the beneficial use of dredge
24 material.

25 Third, with respect to the purple

1 loosestrife control program, although an admirable
2 project, provides little benefit to the estuary of the
3 Columbia channel deepening and the endangered species
4 recovery.

5 The next one is Tenasillahe Island.
6 The interim and long-term emphasis in restoration
7 mitigation at Tenasillahe island will definitely provide
8 benefits for listed fish through reconnecting valuable
9 interim tidal marsh habitat to the estuary.

10 Unfortunately, long-term restoration measures that are
11 continued upon the success of the Columbian white-tailed
12 deer are likely to take a decade. Deepening impacts will
13 occur during construction with restoration taking place
14 years after.

15 With respect to the Cottonwood-Howard
16 restoration proposal, this involves acquiring 650 acres of
17 Columbian white-tailed deer habitat. Disposal dredge
18 material for riparian restoration for deer habitat is also
19 included. Based on the success of revegetating Rice
20 Island and other dredge material disposal sites, it is
21 unlikely these disposal sites will provide high quality
22 habitat for Columbian white-tailed deer.

23 The Bachelor Slough project involves
24 dredging 2.7 miles of slough habitat to achieve an
25 elevation of zero feet mean low water and disposing of

1 dredge material through our native forests on disposal
2 locations. It is the National Marine Fisheries Service's
3 finding in the channel deepening biological opinion that
4 juvenile salmonids actually migrate to at least minus six
5 feet mean low water. Consequently, restoring a slough to
6 minus zero is unlikely to benefit these species.
7 Additionally, a site investigation demonstrated a
8 relatively small gain in habitat complexity. Opening a
9 channel at Bachelor Slough, while it may improve water
10 quality, does not benefit physical habitat for most of the
11 channel because it has been diked.

12 With respect to tidegate retrofits,
13 these may be beneficial -- could be beneficial to
14 restoring conductivity between diked areas and riparian
15 estuary. However, these tidegates included are all on
16 private property and, therefore, there's no guarantees
17 that these properties will be completed.

18 I guess I better sum up.

19 With respect to the ecosystem research
20 and adaptive management, although needed, ecosystem
21 research and adaptive management program developed among
22 the Corps and National Marine Services and U.S. Fish and
23 Wildlife Service as the project sponsor in and of itself
24 do not offset the impacts of the deepening.

25 Of the above projects, the only ones

1 that are required by the services are ecosystem research
2 and adaptive manage. Therefore, the idea of leaving this
3 retrofit a better place may never happen because the Corps
4 is not required by the services in the terms and
5 conditions of the biological opinion to complete the
6 restoration project.

7 In summary, the purpose of the ESA
8 consultation was to ensure the endangered species impacts
9 were minimized by the project and how the associated
10 restoration features will specifically benefit the --

11 MR. WIGGINS: Mr. White.

12 MR. WHITING: Okay. One sentence?

13 MR. WIGGINS: One sentence.

14 MR. WHITING: While the other projects
15 will bring minimal benefit in the form of water quality
16 improvements and invasive species removal in a context of
17 a Columbia estuary system, the projects they proposed
18 demonstrate only a little, if any, ecological gain.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Whiting.

21 Mr. Van Ess followed by Mr. Warren and
22 Mr. Hunt.

23 MR. VAN ESS: Good evening. My name
24 is Matt Van Ess, V-a-n E-s-s. I am putting these comments
25 on behalf of myself this evening. CREST will be

1 officially submitting comments. I appreciate the
2 flexibility.

3 Thanks for the opportunity to comment
4 on the Draft Supplemental Integrated Feasibility Report
5 and Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed
6 deepening of the Columbia and Lower Willamette River
7 Federal navigation channel, for deepening of six turning
8 basins, the designation of new upland estuary and ocean
9 disposal sites, and the ecosystem restoration features
10 included the project.

11 At the direction of the CREST council,
12 CREST --

13 MR. WIGGINS: Mr. Van Ess, I'm sorry,
14 could you slow down just a little bit.

15 MR. VAN ESS: I'll try.

16 -- CREST staff analyzed and provided
17 comments on the draft and final EIS's and has continued to
18 track this proposal. Based on our review of the draft and
19 final EIS's, it was CREST's finding that the project could
20 not be done as proposed without resulting in negative
21 impacts to the natural resources and the economies of the
22 communities surrounding the Columbia River estuary. CREST
23 also found that the proposed project violated local
24 regulations, state and federal law, including National
25 Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, the Coastal

1 Zone Management Act and the Endangered Species Act. We
2 were right. Coastal zone consistency and water quality
3 certification was denied by both states and the National
4 Marine Fisheries withdrew their biological opinion. The
5 project was simply denied, the necessary approvals to move
6 forward.

7 MR. WIGGINS: Mr. Van Ess.

8 MR. VAN ESS: End of EIS process. End
9 of project.

10 CREST's initial findings also found
11 cumulative estuary impacts will result from the project,
12 specifically direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to
13 Dungeness crab, Columbia River smelt, sturgeon, salmonids,
14 the estuarine food web and shoreline habitat. These
15 impacts must be avoided and, if unavoidable, mitigated.
16 And I know the Corps is moving forward with studies.
17 Study is not mitigation.

18 Well, that was then, so what has
19 changed now since the project was denied? A
20 reconsultation effort was conducted by project sponsors,
21 the Corps and the services. The outcome? The project is
22 now worse. The estuary ecosystem of the lower river
23 communities are still negatively impacted through disposal
24 options, not only on crab grounds but now by permanently
25 altering the estuary for disposal.

1 In Longview -- I was at the Longview
2 hearing and I heard from project sponsors that ocean
3 disposal has been eliminated. It's not true. The
4 supplemental EIS merely postpones the use of the ocean and
5 shifts the impacts of dump sites to salmon fishers and
6 permanently alters the estuary.

7 I also heard in Longview that big
8 projects preserve big benefits to fish and wildlife and
9 that the Supplemental EIS outlines plans to leave the
10 estuary a better place. It's not true. The series of
11 ecosystem restoration features taken as a whole do not
12 negate impacts from the actual deepening. With the
13 exception of the long-term Tenasillahe Island proposal, it
14 provides little, if any, positive benefits to the estuary.

15 The deepening project, channel
16 maintenance dredging and, again, channel maintenance all
17 face similar problems. We're running out of acceptable
18 places to dump dredge material. We have a math problem
19 and there's no solution for this. We need one. This is
20 now partially why we're faced with dump sites with
21 restoration.

22 What else has changed since the
23 project was denied? The Willamette River is now deferred.
24 Actually, the Willamette is still preauthorized and is
25 included in the description of the proposed action on page

1 1 of the supplemental EIS. The supplemental EIS lacks
2 detail to support the dredging in the Super Fund sites.
3 This portion of the project -- we need to change the
4 preauthorization to remove Willamette deepening from the
5 project. As the record of decision moves forward, we will
6 also be approving the Willamette.

7 Second, the volume and costs have
8 changed. Our specific question is on the sediment volumes
9 and this over width dredging. We're specifically
10 concerned about the over width dredging. We've asked
11 project sponsors and the Corps about the locations and the
12 volume of the over width dredging locations involved and
13 we do so again tonight. Have the sediments in these over
14 width dredging locations been characterized for chemicals
15 of concern?

16 What else has changed? Adaptive
17 management among the federal agencies and the project
18 sponsors now the project can move forward. CREST is
19 requesting that DOC, the Department of Land, Conservation
20 and Development, Oregon Department of Environmental
21 Quality, Oregon Division of State Lands, the Department of
22 Ecology in Washington, and the Washington Department of
23 Natural Resources be equally involved with any proposed
24 adaptive management framework.

25 What else has changed? The project

1 benefits have. There are our flaws on the benefit side
2 such as light loading and that the need for the deeper
3 channel was seasonal. The fact revealed by the press, by
4 other Corps projects nationally and by the Corps zone
5 economic panel is that multi-national shipping
6 corporations call the shots, shots that the shipping rates
7 are not based on channel depth but based on demand.

8 And a further question is why we're
9 even here tonight. We've also heard nothing about the
10 cost of the projects to the estuarine ecosystem that's
11 critical to salmon recovery in the entire basin. We've
12 also heard nothing about the cost of the projects on the
13 lower river communities. We must move beyond channel
14 deepening, move forward with creative solutions such as
15 increasing beneficial uses of Columbia sediment and
16 expanding meaningful large scale community based
17 restoration of the estuary.

18 Again, CREST will be offering more
19 written comments, as will I personally. I also would like
20 to take this time to ask for a public comment period on
21 the final supplemental EIS. I'm not sure how long that's
22 going to be, but we need time to take into account any
23 changes of the technical reviews of panels on the
24 economics.

25 Thank you.

1 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Van Ess.
2 Mr. Warren, Mr. Hunt and then Mr.
3 Williamson, please.

4 MR. WARREN: My name is Robert Warren.
5 I'm the Executive Director of CV Resources (phonetic), a
6 community based education of the watershed restoration
7 located on the Chinook River, which is the western most
8 salmon bearing tributary of the Columbia River basin. Our
9 mission is to reestablish the connection between the
10 community's economic wealth and the ecological health of
11 the watershed that's important through hands-on training,
12 community education and implementation of our watershed
13 plan. Our strategy is to take a whole basin -- our
14 restoration strategy is to take a whole basin approach to
15 salmon recovery. As an organization actively engaged in
16 watershed and salmon restoration activities, we are
17 seriously concerned about the implications that channel
18 deepening may have in two specific areas. Number one, the
19 potential impacts on the small rural communities that
20 depend on the natural resources the river estuary and near
21 shore environments provide and, number two, the impact
22 this project will have on efforts to restore the Columbia
23 River estuary and efforts to recover salmon in the greater
24 Columbia River basin. Our confidence in the government's
25 ability to recover salmon to the Columbia River basin is

1 further weakened as we see the outcome of the regulatory
2 review of this project. A successful approach to salmon
3 recovery requires the application of restoration and
4 management strategies that are base and sound ecological
5 principles. In this case, the application of the
6 Endangered Species Act seems to reflect the idea that we
7 can manage species to the brink of extinction but not make
8 the difficult decisions that will lead to full recovery.
9 As an agency tasked with the important responsibilities of
10 recovering listed species approval project that may
11 continue to damage an already degraded critical habitat,
12 we have to wonder what hope we can hold for the recovery
13 of salmon and the subsequent revitalization of the
14 communities that have relied on the river for economic and
15 spiritual assistance.

16 I believe I have witnessed an approach
17 by some federal agencies that have shown an apparent total
18 disregard for the local communities it will likely effect.
19 One hears and reads the words of the importance of the
20 public outreach, coordination, cooperation but often only
21 gets condescending attitude, arrogance and the sense that
22 locals are simply an annoyance that need to be overcome.
23 Often the greater effort is in finding a way around local
24 issues rather than demonstrating a genuine attempt to find
25 a mutually acceptable solution. Two examples are the two

1 restoration beaches that have been discussed,
2 Miller-Pillar and Lois Island. In this case, we are
3 operating in a severely altered estuary and river system
4 that continues to be managed in a way that is not
5 beneficial to efforts to protect and restore natural
6 resources. Until all responsible parties act in a way
7 that is conducive to restoring some semblance of a natural
8 system, we will slowly make any progress in salmon
9 recovery. We also believe that the managing and
10 regulatory agencies should apply the same standard to
11 evaluate the potential impacts on endangered salmon as has
12 been applied when making other management decisions in the
13 Columbia basin. For example, even after decades of
14 studying the impacts of dams on salmon survival, the
15 National Marine Fisheries Service cited insufficient
16 scientific evidence as a reason for not forcing the option
17 of breaching the four lower Snake River dams even though
18 the benefits seem intuitively obvious.

19 The relative state of the science and
20 understanding regarding the impacts of dredging and dredge
21 material management on the estuary capacity to support
22 native species is meager at best and, therefore,
23 inadequate to let the project proceed. We understand and
24 support the need to maintain safe navigation in the
25 Columbia River and understand the Corps' responsibility to

1 achieve this goal. However, we believe that maintenance
2 of the river for this use needs to be done in a way that
3 is compatible with the needs of lower river communities
4 and with salmon recovery efforts occurring in the Greater
5 Columbia River basin.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Warren.

8 Mr. Hunt, Mr. Williamson and Mr.
9 Bronson. Is that correct? Mr. Bronson? Mr. Browning
10 representing -- from Gerhart? No? Then Ms. Baker.

11 Please.

12 MR. HUNT: My name is Dave Hunt,
13 H-u-n-t, and I serve as the Executive Director the
14 Columbia River Channel Coalition, which has a wide array
15 of ports and businesses and labor unions and farmers and
16 others throughout the entire Northwest. We disagree on a
17 lot of things, but when it comes to issues of maritime
18 commerce, when it comes to issues of exporting and jobs
19 and keeping the vitality of our region both economically
20 and environmentally, we have common ground. On behalf of
21 our coalition, we just really want to commend the Portland
22 District of the Corps not only for doing these additional
23 hearings throughout the region, but for taking the
24 Colonel's personal time as he is new to his job and really
25 getting deeply involved with this issue. I think that's

1 significant to this project and we really appreciate that
2 -- that additional effort, especially the extended comment
3 period. There's a lot of time to be hearing as well as
4 additional written comments still to come in through the
5 15th.

6 I, actually, am going to submit into
7 the record three letters of folks that were not able to be
8 here today. I won't read them, but I will just reference
9 them. One is from the Columbia River pilots who pilot
10 ships up and down the river and know how critical this
11 navigational issue is, one from the Washington State Labor
12 Council representing 450,000 jobs -- 450,000 union members
13 in the state of Washington whose jobs are dependent on
14 maritime commerce, and one representing the Columbia River
15 steamship operators who play a critical role in
16 facilitating maritime commerce on the Columbia. I will
17 submit all of those for the record.

18 I think if you think about those three
19 groups, pilots, labor union, steamship operators, some
20 Washington based, some Oregon based, business, labor, the
21 perspective of on the water and on the land, they really
22 bring very different perspectives, but when it comes to
23 these issues, there is common ground. There is a clear
24 recognition that we need this project to go forward for
25 the economic health and the vitality of our region.

1 I think that there are, I think, four
2 issues that I'd like to touch on briefly. I really
3 commend the Portland District of the Corps for doing this
4 project in a way that is directed at all four of these.
5 First, I'd like to commend the Portland District and the
6 sponsors for doing this project in a way that is not the
7 Delaware River. This is not the Willamette River. It's
8 not the Mississippi River. This is the Columbia River.
9 And you all have done this project in a way that is unique
10 to our region, that addresses the unique concerns to this
11 region and it really does stand on its own.

12 Secondly, related to ocean disposal,
13 it has been said that ocean disposal is still a part of
14 this project. As I read this SEIS, it is clear that ocean
15 disposal in this SEIS is not a part of this project, that
16 no ocean disposal will result as a result of construction
17 of this project. And, in fact, it actually enhances the
18 situation as it relates to the annual dredging actually
19 extending out several years beyond what is currently true.
20 It certainly does not answer all the issues of annual
21 maintenance dredging nor can you, I recognize, as part of
22 this particular project. You made progress far beyond
23 expectations, I think, and addressed all the ocean
24 disposal needs connected with this project and that, I
25 think, needs to be clear.

1 Third, relating to ecosystem
2 restoration, as I read this SEIS, it is clear that the
3 ecosystem restoration measures are not mitigation. They
4 are not trying to replace damage that has been done
5 intentionally or unintentionally as a result of the
6 project. These ecosystem restoration measures are clearly
7 above and beyond the impact trying to leave a net
8 environmental gain. So if we look at those ecosystem
9 restoration measures, even if they don't have -- even if
10 some distrust, that they will have huge beneficial gains
11 that has been demonstrated. It's important to note that
12 these are all still net gains. They're still all above
13 and beyond environmental -- any environmental impacts that
14 require prime mitigation.

15 And, fourth, I think it's important to
16 note that the Willamette River is not included in this
17 project. There has been no appropriations for the
18 Willamette River project. There have been no permits or
19 regulatory approvals for the Willamette River project.
20 This is about the Columbia River.

21 I would agree with several who have
22 testified earlier and the coalition will be the first to
23 stand up and say that there are other issues to be
24 addressed. We would argue that they go above and beyond
25 this project. They are unrelated to this project.

1 They're not the Corps' job to resolve alone and there's
2 lots of examples of entities that are working together to
3 solve this, the three ports on the Oregon side working
4 together, the ports on the Washington side, lower river
5 and further up river working together to resolve these
6 issues. The Puget Island sand pit being filled, Benson
7 Beach being nourished, a whole variety of efforts, and I
8 would really urge -- although it is not part of this
9 project, I really would urge the Corps to continue your
10 efforts outside of this project to be partners in
11 resolving these issues because they are important.
12 They're critically important to our region, but they are
13 not a part of this project.

14 I would also note that the
15 congressional staff representatives on both sides of the
16 river, Congressmen Baird, who are represented here today,
17 have been strong partners in that and I would encourage
18 the Corps to do what one person said earlier, which was to
19 move beyond channel deepening -- move beyond channel
20 deepening to implement actual solutions to these issues
21 and don't hold up this project.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Hunt.

24 Mr. Williamson, Ms. Baker and Ms.

25 Beasley.

1 Please.

2 MR. WILLIAMSON: Good evening. I'm
3 Peter Williamson, Executive Director of the Port of St.
4 Helens representing the port district. We are a sponsor
5 of the proposed deepening project. I want to thank you
6 for providing this chance for public comment on the Draft
7 Supplemental Feasibility Report and EIS for the Columbia
8 River Channel Deepening Project which is vitally important
9 to our economic and environmental health of our region. I
10 have written comments and I'm not going to read through
11 all of them. I'll try to hit some of the high spots for
12 you.

13 I want to make two points tonight and
14 that is that this project is important for our economy and
15 it is important for our environment. It's important for
16 our economy because we need to deepen the river to
17 maintain this vital transportation route to the world
18 economy. It supports \$14 billion a year in annual
19 maritime cargo to sustain businesses, farms and jobs in
20 our region. It will accommodate the changing fleet of
21 larger more fuel efficient ships that call on world trade
22 and the project has broad base support from businesses,
23 labor unions, farmers, ports and communities throughout
24 the Northwest. In our port district, for example, this
25 project has the support of Columbia County's largest

1 private employer, Boise, and also the unanimous support of
2 the executive committee and the membership of the St.
3 Helens-Scappoose Chamber of Commerce. That's because over
4 40,000 local family wage jobs in the region are dependent
5 on this project on the river commerce as are 59,000 other
6 Northwest jobs that are affected by this commerce.

7 As the supplemental report estimates,
8 the benefit to cost ratio for this project are strong with
9 \$18 million -- \$18.3 million per year in annual national
10 transportation savings. This is an estimated benefit of a
11 \$1.46 for every dollar in construction cost which is, we
12 feel, quite conservative.

13 Additionally, we will get regional
14 benefits that don't show. For example -- and I'll get to
15 this a little bit later -- one of our new businesses in
16 Columbia County, United States Gypsum, was not included in
17 the original economic benefit analysis. They have a fleet
18 of ships that -- that are as deep as 43-feet and would
19 benefit from the project. Yet economic benefits are large
20 and diverse, rural and urban, east and west, Oregon and
21 Washington and throughout our entire region.

22 The channel deepening is also
23 important for our environment. You've heard the
24 statistics on how much of the river would be dredged and
25 so on and I won't belabor that. What I want to point out

1 again is achieving net environmental gains is a high
2 standard for a project like this, but it is the right
3 standard to apply. Ecosystem restoration will begin
4 first. The project will restore areas not affected by the
5 project. I'll touch again on this later on. There are
6 some restoration projects -- for example, Port of St.
7 Helens -- that aren't counted in the ecosystem restoration
8 tally, if you will, because they're local restoration
9 projects. We're going to remediate a contaminated wood
10 treating facility with materials from the channel
11 deepening. We're going to reclaim a spent rock pit with
12 materials from the channel deepening that under current
13 Oregon and County law doesn't have to be reclaimed and it
14 is the largest single safety issue with Scappoose
15 Industrial Air Park. It happens to be in the north
16 approach to our runway. So there are some benefits that
17 will occur that aren't part of this tally list, if you
18 will.

19 The biological opinions issued by the
20 National Marine Fisheries and U.S. Wildlife Service has
21 also demonstrated the environmental protections and
22 benefits of this project. It is significant that this
23 report detailed beneficial uses for the clean sand dredge
24 from the Columbia River. We must work to eliminate ocean
25 disposal in order to protect crab and other habitat that

1 this report helps demonstrate how this goal can be
2 achieved and, as Mr. Hunt previously said, we, as channel
3 sponsors, have been working on alternatives for ocean
4 disposal and beneficial use of the material in the estuary
5 and near shore areas.

6 The channel deepening project will
7 benefit our economy and our environment. I urge you to
8 finalize this supplemental report and grant pending
9 regulatory permits to move this important project to
10 completion.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Mr.
13 Williamson.

14 Ms. Baker and then Ms. Beasley.

15 MS. BAKER: Good evening. My name is
16 Nancy Baker. I've been asked to read the following letter
17 on behalf of the Port of Willapoo Harbor. It's addressed
18 to the Colonel regarding the Columbia River deepening
19 project.

20 "Dear sir: The Port of Willapoo Harbor would
21 like to go on record in support of the Columbia
22 River deepening project. We believe this is vital
23 to the economy of the entire Pacific Northwest. We
24 cannot, as a region, remain competitive if ships
25 are forced to leave our major ports without a full

1 load due to inadequate channel. This also has a
2 great impact on the economy of the Midwest, which
3 relies upon Northwest ports for shipment of their
4 product. We appreciate your effort to move this
5 project forward. Sincerely, Jim Leeva (phonetic),
6 Manager, Port of Willapoo Harbor."

7 Thank you.

8 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Ms. Baker.

9 Ms. Beasley.

10 MS. BEASLEY: Good evening. Thank you
11 for the opportunity to speak this evening. I found it
12 troubling, to say the least, having presented many
13 concerns and comments on the Corps and EPA projects over
14 the past several years and, basically, receiving only a
15 response of "Your comments have been noted." Therefore,
16 tonight I will refrain from making specific comments at
17 this time.

18 After reading Colonel Butler's change
19 of command speech in July, I have a better understanding
20 of the Corps' response to hearings and meetings like this
21 evening. I would like to read you some of Colonel
22 Butler's words while speaking to his Portland District
23 team members.

24 Quote, Together we withstood public
25 meetings, answered the mail, newspaper articles and

1 responded to people who feel we are not doing the right
2 things. You provided me the tools to be your heat shield
3 from the outside elements trying to negatively impact how
4 we do our jobs, end quote.

5 It was my understanding that the Corps
6 and EPA said it was willing to work with the states,
7 organizations and communities and citizens, yet we have
8 not been treated with reflection or respect we all
9 deserve. It is difficult to deal with a federal entity
10 that ignores public comments of concern and continues on
11 with their checklist to complete the project, hires
12 internal yet so-called independent experts to extend their
13 agenda and bends the truth to hide the bottom line.

14 In the Draft Environmental Impact
15 Statement, the Corps comments to one individual that's
16 quite disconcerting. Quote, The Corps has no legal
17 obligation under NEPA to ensure the scientific integrity
18 of the studies. The Corps is entitled to rely on its own
19 expert study and under no circumstances need evidence to
20 defend those studies with scientific integrity. Even if
21 the comments had produced some evidence that the Corps'
22 experts lacked proper qualifications or relied upon flawed
23 scientific method, that evidence would not discredit or
24 otherwise render the Corps' studies unreliable or the EIS
25 inadequate, end quote.

1 In the past, we have found the only
2 way to resolve issues with the Corps is through the court
3 process. And even with the court stipulation agreement
4 back in 1997, which is still in place, the Corps has
5 ignored the terms and destroyed the facts of that
6 agreement. The Corps is not without this concern since
7 they have been willing to sit down and work through the
8 issues. The current process has been and continues to be
9 an illegitimate process. It saddens me to have to say
10 these things, but it's true. The Corps and EPA should be
11 ashamed of themselves for the skewing of the eco process.
12 We're still waiting for answers to our previous comments.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. WIGGINS: Thank you, Ms. Beasley.
15 That concludes the list of people who have asked to
16 testify.

17 Colonel Hobernicht, would you close.

18 COLONEL HOBERNICHT: I want to thank
19 you all for coming. Everyone is busy. It's late tonight.
20 Again, thank you. Please drive home safely. For those of
21 you who have driven a long ways, that concludes this
22 meeting unless you have any questions of me.

23 VOICE: Someone was going give the
24 Corps' website for the economic analysis that just came
25 out today.

1 MR. WIGGINS: Correct. Matt.

2 COLONEL HOBERNICHT: He went to run
3 and get it.

4 VOICE: Well, let me follow it up with
5 one question, which is the 15th is a Sunday. Could you
6 confirm that you will take comments on the 16th?

7 MS. HICKS: We'll be receiving them in
8 the mail. We'll accept them.

9 MR. WIGGINS: By the way, here's a
10 flyer that has the mail, e-mail and fax data for how to
11 get in touch with the Army Corps regarding this.

12 COLONEL HOBERNICHT: Thank you very
13 much. Good night.

14 (Whereupon, the proceedings were
15 concluded at 8:30 p.m.)

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