



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

Portland District

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# **Columbia River Channel Improvement Project**

Final Supplemental Integrated Feasibility Report  
and Environmental Impact Statement

## **Volume 5**

Public Testimony

January 2003

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## **PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY**

### **DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL INTEGRATED FEASIBILITY REPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT COLUMBIA RIVER CHANNEL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

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## **Corps of Engineers Responses to Public Hearing Testimony**

This section includes the Corps of Engineers responses to the oral testimony taken for this project at public hearings conducted in July 31, 2002 at Vancouver WA (afternoon and evening sessions); September 5, 2002 at Longview, WA; and September 10, 2002 at Astoria, OR. All testimony received on the project has been considered in revising the proposed project as presented in the Final SEIS. Those individuals that provided both written and oral testimony will find detailed responses to the written testimony in the *Comment Letters* section in this volume. For individuals who only provided oral testimony, responses are provided below (references to responses numbered S, I, and SS refer to the *Comment Letters* section). The format for responses is as follows: date and location of meeting; commenter's name; page number; and line number of the transcript.

### **July 31, 2002, Vancouver, WA (afternoon session)**

#### **Ted Farnsworth**

*Page 37 (Vancouver afternoon), Lines 17-23.* Historically, the Corps of Engineers placed material on hundreds of shoreline disposal sites throughout the river system. This number was drastically reduced in 1994 when the Columbia River was listed as critical habitat for ESA salmonids. The proposed project has only three shoreline locations and does not include the area you are commenting on. The mission of the Corps is to maintain the navigation within the Federal navigation channel on the Columbia River. At this time, there is no plan to remove material from areas used in the past.

### **July 31, 2002 - Vancouver, WA (evening session)**

#### **Larry Snyder, President, Vancouver Wildlife League**

*Page 27 (Vancouver evening), Lines 14-19.* With regard to fishing and hunting opportunity, the proposed project as revised includes ecosystem restoration features that restore habitat for fish and wildlife. At Shillapoo Lake near Vancouver, Washington, approximately 470 to 839 acres of emergent wetlands will be restored. Restoration of 191 acres of tidal marsh-intertidal flat at Lois Island embayment, 235 acres of tidal marsh-intertidal flat at Miller-Pillar and 1,778 acres of intertidal marsh (Tenasillahe Island long-term) also are proposed. The project proposes to maintain natural tidal marsh communities through implementation of a 5-year control program for purple loosestrife from CRM 18-52. As noted in response to S-111-115, the project, including its restoration components, adds productive habitat capacity for salmonids. Expanded habitat availability for listed Columbian white-tailed deer and other aquatic and terrestrial species is provided as well. See Chapter 4, Final SEIS.

*Page 28, Lines 1-18.* The impacts of dredge material disposal and sponsor use of dredge material, the transfer of dredge material to disposal site W-101.0 (a 40-acre disposal site within the boundary of the approximately 1,100-acre Port of Vancouver Columbia Gateway project) and the impacts of the channel improvement project on wetlands and wildlife are

fully considered and evaluated in the 1999 Final IFR/EIS, 2002 Draft SEIS, and presented in the Final SEIS. See the 1999 Final IFR/EIS §2.4 (channel maintenance), §4 (alternatives), §5 (affected environment), §6 (project impacts); Draft SEIS (same); Final SEIS (same). Gateway is an approximately 600 acre proposed industrial development and 500 acre mitigation effort that is being separately planned, evaluated and permitted by the Port of Vancouver. See the 1999 Final IFR/EIS §3.4; Final SEIS §3.4. Because the Port of Vancouver's Gateway development is a reasonably foreseeable future action, its potential effects are analyzed in the Final Supplemental IFR/EIS cumulative effects discussion. See Section 6.12.

**July 31, 2002 - Vancouver, WA (evening session)**  
**Cyndy de Bruler, Columbia RiverKeeper**

*Page 29 (Vancouver evening), Lines 1-14.* Information regarding the project and its schedule has been provided to the public through the Corps' website, public notices, press releases, and notice in the Federal Register for the public review of the Draft SEIS. Adequate notice was provided for the public hearing on July 31, 2002. The public review schedule for the Draft SEIS included additional public hearings through September 10, 2002 and extended opportunity for public comment through September 16, 2002.

*Page 29, Lines 15-18.* Comments regarding the economic analysis misstate the Corps' analysis. Congress has directed the Corps of Engineers to provide an analysis that displays the benefits of a project compared to the costs required to achieve those benefits. The analysis is consistent with the principles and guidelines that govern water resource development analyses. The Corps has undertaken a thorough analysis of the costs and benefits associated with this project, and that analysis has been reviewed thoroughly by an external expert panel. The Corps has reviewed and responded to each of the panel's comments.

*Page 29, Line 18, through Page 30, Line 5.* The Corps considered comments from the public, stakeholder groups and state and federal agencies and revised the proposed project in the Final SEIS. The Lois Island Embayment and Miller-Pillar ecosystem restoration features in the lower Columbia River estuary as revised are presented in the Final SEIS. The Corps believes that these features advance the goals of LCREP, a bi-state effort to restore the lower Columbia River estuary, which calls for an ecosystem based approach to protecting and enhancing the lower Columbia River and estuary. Ecosystem restoration features are voluntary actions by the Corps utilizing existing authorities to implement actions for the betterment of listed species as provided under Section 7(a)(1) of ESA. See response to state comments S-6-S-9, and S-32.

*Page 30, Lines 6-16.* Impacts to ESA listed stocks were thoroughly evaluated in the 1999 Final IFR/EIS, Biological Assessment and Biological Opinions issued by NOAA Fisheries and USFWS in 2002. The EFH consultation for the project is underway with NOAA Fisheries. The consultation will be coordinated with the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. The consultation will be included in the Final SEIS.

*Page 30, Lines 17-23.* With regard to ocean disposal, the Corps' preferred option eliminates the project's use of the ocean disposal site. See response to state comments S-13 to S-16, S-19, and S-133.

*Page 30 Line 24, through Page 31, Line 12.* The 1999 Final IFR/EIS and the Final SEIS evaluate the potential cumulative effects of past and present actions affecting the project area, as well as reasonably foreseeable future actions. The Final SEIS also describes extensive new analysis of sediment chemistry throughout the project area and the potential effect of future cleanup of contaminated areas of the Willamette River. Based on concerns expressed by NOAA Fisheries and others in 1999 about the potential effects of contaminants on the River and estuary, substantial effort was devoted to re-analyzing the issue, including evaluation of thousands of sediment chemistry samples from throughout the project area. The new analysis confirms the Corps' initial conclusion that project activities do not pose a significant risk of adverse effects from contaminants. This conclusion is supported by the NOAA Fisheries and USFWS Biological Opinions. The database of sediment quality in the Columbia River is much larger than the 89 samples mentioned. The Corps has identified over 100 separate studies it has conducted in the last 22 years in the Columbia River for various purposes. Over 4,000 samples on the Columbia River have been identified. This information continues to be updated. The Corps is actively populating the SEDQUAL database to include these identified Corps' studies. The Corps, USFWS and NOAA Fisheries have committed to annually review the Columbia River sediment quality database including new sediment data and determine if conditions trigger the need for additional testing. Also see response to stakeholders comments SS-13, SS-20, SS-106, SS-111 and SS-192, 1.

*Page 31, Lines 13-22.* The Corps convened a Technical Panel to review Benefits and Costs the week of August 5 through August 9, 2002. The expert panel's meetings were open and transparent and the public was invited to attend. All information provided to the panel was posted on the Corps' website prior to the meeting. All presentations made by the Corps' facilitator, the Corps, Port of Portland and consultants were posted to the Corps' website after the event. The panel's findings were also posted to the Corps' website prior to the close of the public comment period. The public has had approximately five months to digest the outcomes of the panel meeting and will have 30 days to comment on the Corps' Final SEIS and how the Corps has considered the panel's work.

**July 31, 2002 - Vancouver, WA (evening session)**

**Tom Barton**

*Page 42 (Vancouver evening), Lines 4-15.* The commenter's suggestion to filling wetlands to help control mosquito infestations is contrary to Federal law establishing a goal of no net loss of wetlands. The Corps has identified and will continue to look for beneficial uses for dredged materials.

**September 5, 2002 - Longview, WA**  
**Jack Keulker, City of Kelso Council**

*Page 26 (Longview), Lines 15-22.* Puget Island was used as a shoreline disposal site for many years on an intermittent frequency. As a result, shoreline was created by the placement of dredged material. This created beach is actively eroding because material is not currently being placed along the shoreline. In 1994 when the Columbia River was listed as Critical Habitat for ESA salmonids, use of the Puget Island shoreline was prohibited by NOAA Fisheries. Erosion of the Puget Island shoreline is not a function of dredging the channel but a function of not continuing to use the shoreline as a disposal location. The beaches that were created along the shoreline are not as stable a feature as the natural bank of Puget Island and will continue to erode over time due to natural processes. See also response to individuals comment I-15.

**September 5, 2002 - Longview, WA**  
**Kent Martin**

*Page 42 (Longview), Lines 3-14.* Page 6-34 cited by the commenter refers to juvenile salmonids. See response to stakeholders comment SS-116.

*Page 42, Lines 15-21.* See response to stakeholders comment SS-9.

*Page 42, Line 22, through Page 43, Line 19.* The Corps of Engineers does not disagree with the commenter's assertion that the lower Columbia River communities are economically depressed and that they have relied on the fishing industry for their income in the past. However, as is evident with the two "no jeopardy" opinions by NOAA Fisheries and USFWS, this project should not jeopardize existence of the species nor shall it further reduce commercial fishing. See response to individuals comment I-49.

**September 10, 2002 - Astoria, OR**  
**Jon Westerholm**

*Page 32 (Astoria), Line 22 through Page 33, Line 15.* The Corps of Engineers does not disagree with the commenter's assertion that the lower Columbia River communities are economically depressed and that they have relied on the fishing industry for their income in the past. However, as is evident with the two "no jeopardy" opinions by NOAA Fisheries and USFWS, this project should not jeopardize existence of the species nor shall it further reduce commercial fishing. See response to individuals comment I-49.

**September 10, 2002 - Astoria, OR**  
**Ms. Manarino**

*Page 40 (Astoria), Line 20 to Page 41, Line 18.* The Corps of Engineers disagrees with the commenter that this project has overstated project benefits. As stated several times, the Corps has requested the information the Oregonian used to produce their analysis and it has

never been furnished. Further, the Corps has conducted a technical review of the economics of the project with four experts in disciplines related to maritime industry and economics, to review the underlying information and assumptions used in the Corps' analysis. Please see response to stakeholders comment SS-192.

*Page 41, Line 19 to Page 42, Line 7.* The 1999 Final IFR/EIS and the Final SEIS evaluate the potential cumulative effects of past and present actions affecting the project area, as well as reasonably foreseeable future actions. The Final SEIS also describes extensive new analysis of sediment chemistry throughout the project area and the potential effect of future cleanup of contaminated areas of the Willamette River. Based on concerns expressed by NOAA Fisheries and others in 1999 about the potential effects of contaminants on the River and estuary, substantial effort was devoted to re-analyzing the issue, including evaluation of thousands of sediment chemistry samples from throughout the project area. The new analysis confirms the Corps' initial conclusion that project activities do not pose a significant risk of adverse effects from contaminants. This conclusion is supported by the NOAA Fisheries and USFWS Biological Opinions. The database of sediment quality in the Columbia River is much larger than the 89 samples mentioned. The Corps has identified over 100 separate studies it has conducted in the last 22 years in the Columbia River for various purposes. Over 4,000 samples on the Columbia River have been identified. This information continues to be updated. The Corps is actively populating the SEDQUAL database to include these identified Corps' studies. The Corps, USFWS and NOAA Fisheries have committed to annually review the Columbia River sediment quality database including new sediment data and determine if conditions trigger the need for additional testing. Also see response to stakeholders comments SS-13, SS-20, SS-106, SS-111 and SS-192, 1.

**September 10, 2002 - Astoria, OR**  
**B.J. Foley**

*Page 46 (Astoria), Line 20, to Page 47, Line 6.* Puget Island was used as a shoreline disposal site for many years on an intermittent frequency. As a result, shoreline was created by the placement of dredged material. This created beach is actively eroding because material is not currently being placed along the shoreline. In 1994 when the Columbia River was listed as Critical Habitat for ESA salmonids, use of the Puget Island shoreline was prohibited by NOAA Fisheries. Erosion of the Puget Island shoreline is not a function of dredging the channel but a function of not continuing to use the shoreline as a disposal location. The beaches that were created along the shoreline are not as stable a feature as the natural bank of Puget Island and will continue to erode over time due to natural processes. See also response to individuals comment I-15. Further, the Corps of Engineers does not regulate speed limits on the Columbia River. This is the responsibility of the U.S. Coast Guard and the Columbia River pilots who navigate vessels as appropriate to maintain safety.

**September 10, 2002 - Astoria, OR**  
**Robert Warren**

*Page 73 (Astoria), Line 16, to Page 74, Line 18.* The Corps considered comments from the public, stakeholder groups and state and federal agencies and revised the proposed project in the Final SEIS. The Lois Island Embayment and Miller-Pillar ecosystem restoration features in the lower Columbia River estuary as revised are presented in the Final SEIS. The Corps believes that these features advance the goals of LCREP, a bi-state effort to restore the lower Columbia River estuary, which calls for an ecosystem based approach to protecting and enhancing the lower Columbia River and estuary. Ecosystem restoration features are voluntary actions by the Corps utilizing existing authorities to implement actions for the betterment of listed species as provided under Section 7(a)(1) of ESA. See response to state comments S-6-S-9, and S-32.

*Page 74, Line 19 to Page 75, Line 5.* See response to stakeholder comments SS-113, SS-165, SS-170, SS-178, and SS-229.