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New England District

News release

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Corps proposes a habitat restoration project of the Mill River and Mill Pond in Stamford

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District is proposing a habitat restoration project of the Mill River and Mill Pond in Stamford, Conn. The proposed Federal action involves the removal of approximately 18,600 cubic yards of sediment from the Mill Pond and removal of the Main Street Dam and concrete retaining walls around the Mill Pond.

“Removing these structures will create an opportunity to restore the river channel and floodplain to Mill River Park and open 4.5 miles of the Mill River for fish passage,” said Project Manager Adam Burnett, of the Corps’ New England District Engineering/Planning Division.

The sediment to be excavated may require additional testing to verify permitted disposal. All materials determined inappropriate for disposal in residential and/or industrial/commercial areas would be transported to an approved site, such as Manchester Municipal Landfill in Manchester, Conn. Additional actions included in the proposed plan include: enhancing the riparian corridor through planting native woody and herbaceous vegetation and removing exotic and invasive plant species; restoring tidal wetlands through re-grading banks and planting native salt marsh vegetation; and removing concrete blocks and remnant gate structures directly beneath the Pulaski Street Bridge.

“As a recreational component to the project and to replace existing sidewalks and trails in the affected areas, the proposed action also includes incorporating a trail system to connect the greenway and parks along the river corridor,” Burnett said.

This work is being conducted under Section 206 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 which provides programmatic authority for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to carry out aquatic ecosystem restoration projects that improve environmental quality, are in the

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public interest, and are cost effective.

Public comments on this proposed work will be accepted through June 17, 2004. An Environmental Assessment is available for review upon request. A copy of the document is available for review at the Stamford Public Library at One Public Library Plaza in Stamford.

“A range of alternative plans was evaluated to determine the most practicable and cost-effective restoration plan,” Burnett said. These alternatives included: 1) no action; 2) dam removal and river channel restoration (preferred plan); 3) dam removal and creation of step pools; and 4) partial removal of concrete retaining walls (Mill Pond Dam and Mill Pond remain). Removal of the dam without removing the walls was also considered, but was dropped from further consideration. This measure would create a channelized reach with walls that would need additional protection at considerable expense with no restoration benefit to the currently impounded reach.

“The goal of this project is to restore the aquatic and riparian resources of the Mill River to a healthy, viable, and self-maintaining river system,” Burnett said. “To measure the environmental benefits of each alternative and determine cost-effectiveness, a series of habitat criteria were identified and compared.”

Removal of the Main Street Dam will have no adverse impact to properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. However, because of the potential for prehistoric and historic archaeological sites (especially mill sites) in the vicinity of the project area, it is recommended that a Phase Ib archaeological survey be conducted once more detailed designs are developed for the project. Any locations where ground-disturbing activities will be carried out will require systematic archaeological survey coverage.

The results of the Phase Ib archaeological survey will be coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Office, the Connecticut State Archaeologist, Indian Tribes with ancestral ties to the area, and any other interested parties identified in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

The proposed project will not adversely impact the seven individual properties within a one mile radius that are listed on the National Register, including the Main Street Bridge. Likewise, the project will not adversely impact the two nearby historic districts – the Downtown Stamford Historic District and the Downtown Stamford Ecclesiastical Complexes.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection have not identified any federally listed, threatened, or endangered species in the project area. A Water Quality Certification will be acquired from the CT DEP pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and a Coastal Zone Management consistency determination will be submitted to the CT Office of Long Island Sound Programs pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act.

The proposed work is being coordinated with the following Federal, State, and local agencies: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer, the Connecticut State Archeologist, the City of Stamford, Save the Sound, Inc., Aquarion Water Company, and American Rivers.

A copy of the public notice and other information are available at the Corps website: <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>. Select “projects” and “Mill River and Mill Pond Habitat Restoration Project” or go directly to the project website at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/projects/ct/millriverpond.htm>

To assist in properly evaluating this proposal, the Corps of Engineers is seeking public comments. Comments should be submitted no later than June 17, 2004 to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, Engineering/Planning Division (ATTN: Adam Burnett), 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751. Additional information is available from Project Manager Adam Burnett at 978-318-8547.