



Public Notice

U.S. Army Corps
Of Engineers
New England District
696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

Date: May 17, 2004

Comment Period Closes: June 17, 2004

Evaluation Branch, Engineering/Planning Division

30-DAY PUBLIC NOTICE MILL RIVER AND MILL POND STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District plans a habitat restoration project of the Mill River and Mill Pond in Stamford, Connecticut. This work is being conducted under Section 206 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996, P.L. 104-303, as amended. Section 206 provides programmatic authority for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to carry out aquatic ecosystem restoration projects that improve environmental quality, are in the public interest, and are cost effective. Attachment 1 is a project area location map and Attachment 2 includes a list of pertinent laws, regulations, and directives considered in project planning.

Project Description: The proposed Federal action involves the removal of approximately 18,600 cubic yards of sediment from the Mill Pond, the removal of the Main Street Dam, and the 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. 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, Connecticut. The restored channel will effectively transport sediment and nutrients, supporting aquatic, riverbank, and floodplain habitat. Additional actions included in the proposed plan include: 1) enhancing the riparian corridor through planting native woody and herbaceous vegetation and removing exotic and invasive plant species; 2) creating and restoring tidal wetlands through re-grading banks and planting native salt marsh vegetation; and 3) 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.

Additional Information: Additional information may be obtained from the Engineering/Planning Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mr. Adam Burnett, the Project and Ms. Judith Johnson, of the Environmental Resources Section, at the return address shown. These individuals may also be reached by phone, for Mr. Burnett at (978) 318-8547 and or Email at adam.w.burnett@usace.army.mil and for Ms. Johnson at 978-318-8138 or Email at judith.l.johnson@usace.army.mil. Collect calls will be accepted weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Coordination: The proposed work is being coordinated with the following Federal, State, and local agencies:

Federal:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
National Marine Fisheries Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State:

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CT DEP)
Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer (will coordinate during archaeological survey)
Connecticut State Archaeologist (same as above)

Local:

Save the Sound, Inc.
Aquarion Water Company
American Rivers
City of Stamford

Environmental Impacts: An Environmental Assessment is available for public review upon request to the Engineering/Planning Division of the Army Corps of Engineers. A copy of the document is also available for review at the Stamford Public Library at One Public Library Plaza in Stamford. A preliminary determination has been made that an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed project is not required under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. This determination will be reviewed in light of facts submitted in response to this notice and other coordination efforts.

Alternatives: A range of alternative plans were evaluated to determine the most practicable and cost-effective restoration plan. These alternatives included the Alternative 1 - No Action, Alternative 2 - Dam Removal and River Channel Restoration (Preferred Plan), Alternative 3 - Dam Removal and Creation of Step Pools, and Alternative 4 - Partial Removal of Concrete Retaining Walls (Mill Pond Dam and Mill Pond remain). Removal of the dam without removing the walls was also formulated, 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. Additional restoration measures, which would occur upstream and downstream of the dam for each alternative, were included in the evaluation of alternatives (except No Action). These additional actions included:

- Creating a 1.0 acre wetland and outdoor education area on the JM Wright Technical School grounds
- Enhancing 1.53 acres of the riparian corridor through removal of exotic and invasive plant species and planting of native woody and herbaceous vegetation
- Creating and restoring 0.8 acres of tidal wetlands through re-grading banks and planting native salt marsh vegetation
- Removing concrete blocks and gate structures directly beneath the Pulaski Street Bridge
- Incorporating a trail system to connect the greenway and parks along the river corridor

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. To measure the environmental benefits of each alternative and determine cost-effectiveness, a series of habitat criteria were identified. Values of habitat unit outputs, measured as effected acres, were assigned to the criteria for each of the various alternatives, and the total values were calculated. The results of this analysis determined that the predicted habitat unit outputs for each proposed alternative were considerably better than the habitat unit outputs of the no-action alternative. The improved habitat unit outputs expected after project completion were calculated by subtracting the habitat unit output of the no-action alternative from the score of the other alternatives. Habitat units ranged from 3.3 for the no-action alternative to 43.9 for Alternative 2, which had the highest level of habitat improvement. Additive measures provide additional habitat improvements in the project area of 1.8 for removal of the fish blockage, 3.1 for tidal wetland restoration, 5.1 for riparian corridor restoration and 4.8 for freshwater wetland creation. These additional measures were added to the alternatives (except for the no- action alternative) in a linear fashion to achieve a more comprehensive restoration goal. The added measure involving the restoration of a one-acre freshwater wetland located at the J.M. Wright Technical School grounds was eliminated from the final evaluation due to its high cost.

Alternative 2 had the highest habitat unit score. The restoration proposed in this alternative is most comparable to the biological community found in a healthy watershed. A diverse array of species within a balanced community would be found on the site with the implementation of this alternative. Alternatives 3 and 4 scored lower than alternative 2. Restoration of the site following the design of Alternatives 3 or 4 would not create as much species diversity nor community diversity. The no-action alternative, Alternative 1, scored substantially lower than all the other outlined plans. With this alternative, the physical characteristics of the site would not change.

Historic and Archaeological Resources: 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 to any other interested parties identified in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800. The extent of the coordination efforts will be determined prior to the commencement of the archaeological study.

The proposed project will not adversely impact the seven individual properties within a 1-mile radius that are listed on the National Register including the Main Street Bridge, nor are adverse impacts expected for the two nearby historic districts - the Downtown Stamford Historic District and the Downtown Stamford Ecclesiastical Complexes.

Endangered Species: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 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. Therefore, the proposed action will not have any effect on threatened or endangered species.

Federal Permit Requirements: 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 (CZM) consistency determination will be acquired from the CT Office of Long Island Sound Programs pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act. A Section 404(b)(1) evaluation, pursuant to the Clean Water Act, is provided as an attachment to the Environmental Assessment.

Comments: Any person who has an interest that may be affected by the proposed project may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted to me within 30 days of the date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest that may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity.

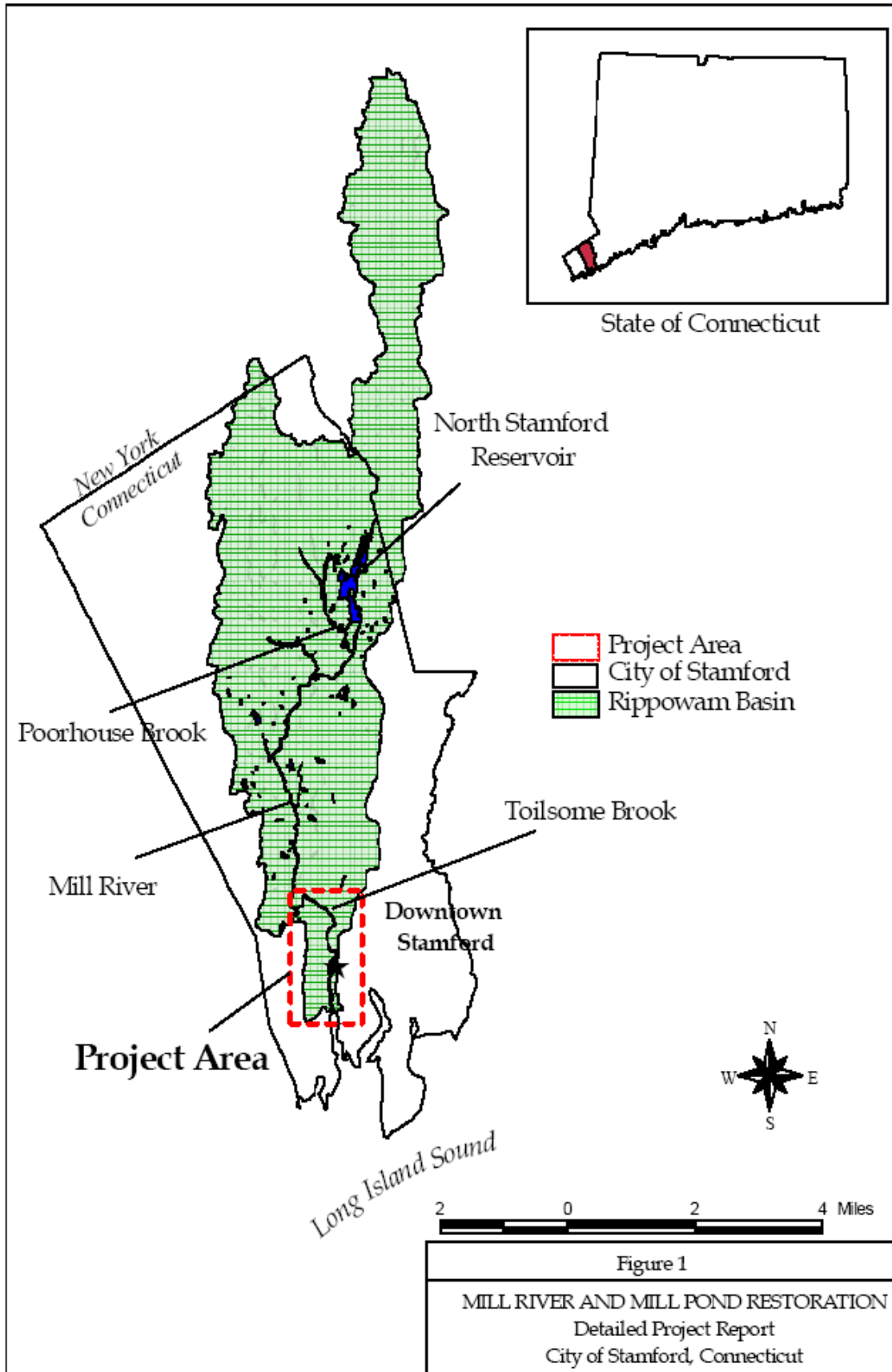
Please bring this notice to the attention of anyone you know to be interested in this project. Comments are invited from all interested parties and should be directed to me at, U.S. Army Corps of the Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, Massachusetts, 01742-2751, Attn: Engineering/Planning Division, within 30 days of this notice.

Date

Brian A. Green
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers
Acting District Engineer

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Location Map



Attachment 2 – Pertinent Laws, Regulations and Directives

American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, 42 U.S.C. 1996.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.

Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.

Clean Water Act of 1977 (Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972), 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.

Federal Water Project Recreation Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 4601-12 et seq.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 4601-1

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.

Preservation of Historic and Archaeological Data Act of 1974, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 469 et seq. This amends the Reservoir Salvage Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 469).

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, May 24, 1977 amended by Executive Order 12148, July 20, 1979

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, May 24, 1977

Executive Order 11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 13 May 1971 (36 FR 8921, May 15, 1971).

Executive Order 13007, Accommodations of Sacred Sites, May 24, 1996.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, February 11, 1994.

Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks, April 21, 1997.

White House Memorandum, Government-to-Government Relations with Indian Tribes, April 29, 1994.