



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
New England District

Engineering/Planning  
696 Virginia Road  
Concord, MA 01742

# Public Notice

Date: August 30, 2016

Comment Period Ends: September 28, 2016

Reply by Mail to: Marie Esten; or by email to:  
marie.e.esten@usace.army.mil

---

## 30 – DAY PUBLIC NOTICE

### **Environmental Assessment of the Continued Operation and Maintenance Activities at the Woonsocket Flood Risk Management Project, Woonsocket, Rhode Island**

Interested parties are hereby notified under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (implementing regulations in Title 40, Parts 1500-1508 of the Code of Federal Regulations and Title 33, Part 230 of the Code of Federal Regulations) that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District, has completed a Draft Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Continued Operation and Maintenance activities at the Woonsocket Flood Risk Management Project (FRMP) in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Attachment 1 is a project location map and Attachment 2 lists pertinent laws, regulations, and directives.

The EA identifies, documents and evaluates the environmental effects of the continued operation and maintenance of the Project in accordance with its authorized project purposes. The EA evaluates impacts to the affected environment, socioeconomics, historical and archeological resources, and assesses potential cumulative impacts. The EA evaluates operation and maintenance activities for compliance with Federal laws, regulations, Executive Orders and Executive Memorandums, and to meet compliance requirements of USACE's Environmental Review Guide for Operations (ERGO).

#### **Description**

The Woonsocket FRMP is a Federal flood damage reduction project located in the city of Woonsocket, Rhode Island (Attachment 1). The Project consists of the Woonsocket Falls Dam, a concrete overflow dam 266 ft. long as well as channel improvements, stone slope protection, earth dikes, concrete floodwalls, pressure conduit and pump stations. The Project extends 8,300 ft. downstream along the Blackstone River from the Massachusetts state line to the center of Woonsocket near the South Main Street Bridge and from the Bernon Street Bridge downstream for about 7,000 ft. in the vicinity of the sewage treatment plant. The project also extends approximately 2,100 ft. upstream along the Mill River from its confluence with the Blackstone River to Privilege Street and approximately 2,100 ft. upstream along the Peters River to Mill Street. A small portion of the project along the west bank of the Blackstone River lies in the town of North Smithfield. The Project protects sections of the city of Woonsocket from flooding events due to large storms. In 2009, USACE assumed ownership of the Project and all associated components (pump stations,

levees, etc.) at the direction of the U.S. Congress in the Military Construction Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, Section 2875. The project was originally authorized as the Upper Woonsocket Local Flood Protection by the Flood Control Act of 22 December 1944 (Public Law 534, 78<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session).

USACE operates the FRMP in accordance with its authorized purposes. The Woonsocket Dam was not designed for flood damage reduction but acts as a Mill/Penstock Dam for the Thundermist hydroelectric facility that is owned and operated for the city of Woonsocket. When conditions warrant, USACE will operate the gates to reduce local isolated flooding upstream.

Routine operations and maintenance actions were analyzed for the potential impacts to water resources, fish and wildlife, vegetation and wetlands, endangered and threatened species, socioeconomics, cultural resources, air quality and noise, and floodplains. The impacts associated with the operation and maintenance activities of this flood risk management project are not significant, and its presence ensures USACE has the ability to reduce flood risk to residential and commercial properties, and infrastructure within the city of Woonsocket during storms.

### **Environmental Resources**

Impacts were analyzed on vegetation and wetlands, fish and wildlife, endangered and threatened species, water resources, air quality and noise, socioeconomics, historic and archeological resources, socioeconomics, floodplains, and recreation areas. Short-term direct impacts to fish and aquatic resources may occur when operating the Tainter gates of the dam in such a manner to result in loss of the impounded pool. When this occurs aquatic species can be temporarily impacted: fish may be swept downstream, accumulated sediment behind the dam may move, there may be temporary loss of benthic fauna, and temporary loss of fish reproduction areas as river levels drop. The direct impact of this action will be realized only a short distance upstream and the affected areas are expected to quickly recolonize from upstream areas. The testing is only of short duration, and upon completion the pool will return to its existing levels. These short-term impacts are considered minimal.

Vegetation maintenance along the areas adjacent to the river, particularly where the flood risk management structures (dike/levee) are at the water's edge may also impact fisheries and wildlife. In general, required ongoing maintenance requires the removal of all vegetation except grasses to maintain access to flood control structures and structural integrity of the facility. This results in unavoidable permanent impacts to shade, nesting and forage cover for fish and wildlife. This impact is unavoidable.

### **Additional Information**

Additional information may be obtained from the Engineering/ Planning Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ms. Marie Esten, Environmental Specialist (978-318-8965 or [marie.e.esten@usace.army.mil](mailto:marie.e.esten@usace.army.mil)).

### **Coordination**

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

**Federal:**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**State:**

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management  
Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Office

**Compliance with other Environmental Laws and Regulations**

Floodplain Management: This Flood Damage Reduction Project is authorized by the U.S. Congress to be located in the floodplain to protect public and private property and infrastructure. The Project was previously authorized and there are no planned substantive changes.

Cultural Resources: The project is not expected to impact any structures or sites of historic, architectural or archeological significance as defined by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended. Coordination is being conducted with the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Officer.

Endangered Species: The project will have no impacts to Federal or state-listed species of concern, rare, threatened, or endangered species.

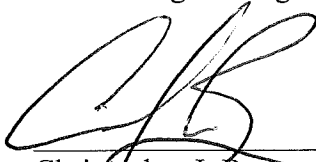
Environmental Impacts: A Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and EA of the proposed action has been prepared and is available upon request to Ms. Marie Esten, Environmental Resources Specialist, at the telephone numbers noted above, and can be obtained at the following location:

<http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/PublicNotices.aspx>.

USACE has made a preliminary determination that an Environmental Impact Statement for the action is not required under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. This determination will be reviewed in light of the facts submitted in response to this notice.

**Comments**

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 Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, Massachusetts, 01742-2751, ATTN: Engineering-Planning Division, within 30 days of this notice.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher J. Barron  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer

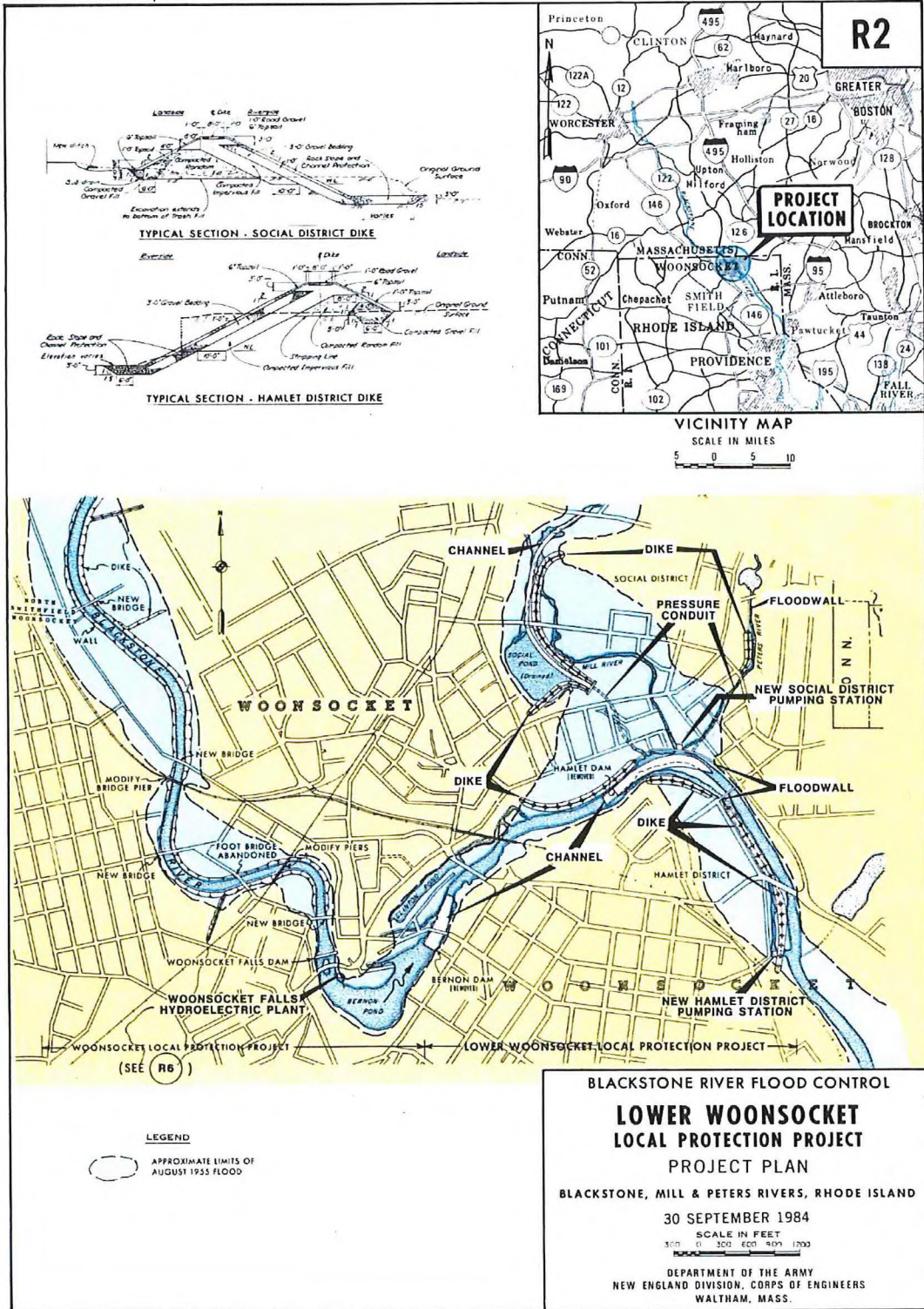
11 JUL 2016  
Date

# ATTACHMENT 1

## LOCATION MAPS

CORPS OF ENGINEERS

U.S. ARMY







## ATTACHMENT 2

### PERTINENT LAWS, REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES

#### **Federal Statutes:**

Preservation of Historic and Archeological Data Act of 1974, as amended, 16 U.S.C 469 et seq.

Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401 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. 4601-4 et seq.

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

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), 25 U.S.C. 3000-3013, 18 U.S.C. 1170

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

Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 401 et seq.

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

#### **Executive Orders**

Executive Order 11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 13 May 1971

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, 24 May 1977 amended by Executive Order 12148, 20 July 1979;  
subsequently amended by Executive Order 13690, January 30, 2015

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice, 11 February 1994

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

Executive Order 13061, and Amendments – Federal Support of Community Efforts Along American Heritage Rivers

Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, 6 November 2000

#### **Executive Memorandum**

Analysis of Impacts on Prime or Unique Agricultural Lands in Implementing NEPA, 11 August 1980

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