FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Anacostia Watershed Restoration, Montgomery County, Maryland
Continuing Authorities Program Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District (Corps) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (IFR/EA) dated XX XX YYYY, for the Anacostia Watershed Restoration, Montgomery County, Maryland addresses watershed restoration opportunities and feasibility in the Anacostia River watershed within Montgomery County, Maryland.

The Final IFR/EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would restore stream habitat utilizing natural channel design principles and remove fish blockages within portions of the Anacostia River watershed in Montgomery County, Maryland in the study area. The recommended plan is the National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) Plan and consists of improving stream habitat condition in Bel Pre Creek for a total length of 2.5 miles of the stream, extending from Bel Pre Neighborhood Park to 100 feet upstream of the confluence with the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River, and restoring 0.7 miles of Lamberton Creek from the outfall at Yeatman Terrace to 1,000 feet upstream of the confluence with the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River. Concept designs for stream restoration have been developed for Bel Pre Creek and Lamberton Creek that consist of lifting the stream channel using a series of grade control structures that include a mixture of riffle grade controls structures, j-hooks with riffle aprons, and cross vanes with riffle aprons to provide consistent raising of the channel bed and a series of riffle pool habitat. Removal of non-native invasive species, streambank grading, and planting of native vegetation will be completed as part of the restoration effort.

The Recommended Plan addresses two fish blockages for resident fish by lifting the stream at the culvert on Poplar Run, a tributary of Bel Pre, and at Lovejoy Street along Lamberton Creek resulting in a net increase of 0.7 miles of fish habitat improvements. The natural channel design approach for this segment consists of lifting the stream channel bed using a series of grade control structures. Removal of the fish blockages will provide anadromous fish species of concern with substantially greater access to their historical range, thereby contributing to increases in the populations of these species.

In addition to a “no action” plan, five alternatives were evaluated.[1] The alternatives included

- Alternative 2a - Natural Channel Design
- Alternative 2b - Natural Channel Design with Major Infrastructure Modification
- Alternative 2c - Natural Channel Design without Concrete Channel Alteration
- Alternative 3 - Hard Design
- Alternative 4 - Streambank Stabilization

The evaluation and comparison of these alternatives is provided in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 of the IFR/EA. Alternative 2b, Natural Channel Design with Major Infrastructure Modification, was not evaluated further due to challenges in implementation and because it includes a measure that violates the project constraint for impacts to infrastructure, costs of road and bridge

[1] 40 CFR 1505.2(b) requires a summary of the alternatives considered.

relocation, and potential effects on flood water conveyance. Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 were screened out as they did not meet aquatic ecosystem restoration objectives established during the study. Alternative 2a and 2c were modeled for cost-effectiveness and incremental cost benefits associated with habitat outputs. Alternative 2c was screened following this analysis as it would provide equivalent outputs and costs as Alternative 2a for the three cost-effective stream segments – Bel Pre Tributary, Sligo Creek, and Lamberton Tributary.

Alternative 2a the natural channel design alternatives offer ecosystem restoration benefits with low environmental impact while being implementable and sustainable and was identified as the NER Plan. No Action was carried forward for purposes of comparison to with-project conditions.

For all alternatives, the potential effects to the following resources were evaluated:

	In-depth evaluation conducted	Brief evaluation due to minor effects	Resource unaffected by action
Aesthetics	☐	☒	☐
Air quality	☒	☐	☐
Aquatic resources/wetlands	☒	☐	☐
Invasive species	☐	☒	☐
Fish and wildlife habitat	☒	☐	☐
Threatened/Endangered species	☒	☐	☐
Historic properties	☒	☐	☐
Other cultural resources	☒	☐	☐
Floodplains	☐	☒	☐
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	☐	☒	☐
Hydrology	☒	☐	☐
Land use	☐	☐	☒
Navigation	☐	☐	☒
Noise levels	☐	☒	☐
Public infrastructure	☐	☒	☐
Socio-economics	☐	☒	☐
Soils	☐	☒	☐
Tribal trust resources	☒	☐	☐
Water quality	☐	☒	☐
Climate change	☐	☒	☐

All practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in Chapter 5 of the IFR/EA will be implemented to minimize impacts.[2] Project construction will result in localized, short-term, and minor detrimental environmental impacts to water quality, air quality, and noise levels. In-stream work will cause unavoidable destruction of some common aquatic organisms. All adverse effects will be minimized through utilization of best management practices and activities will be conducted according to state and federal requirements. The project purpose is aquatic ecosystem restoration, and project impacts are temporary in nature and habitat will be replaced in kind or better; therefore, no compensatory mitigation is required. The majority of the

[2] 40 CFR 1505.2(C) all practicable means to avoid and minimize environmental harm are adopted.

project work will be confined to the area in between the stream banks, and based on cultural resource surveys, is not expected to result in adverse impacts to cultural resources. Access roads and staging areas will not include subsurface excavation and will be confined to previously disturbed areas when possible.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the Recommended Plan will result in a "No Effect" the following federally listed species or its designated critical habitat: the Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) concurred with the Corps' determination.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that historic properties would not be adversely affected by the recommended plan. The Maryland Historical Trust concurred with the determination on 1 May 2023.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan has been found to be compliant with Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The proposed project meets the general and regional terms and conditions of Nationwide Permit #27 (NW27), for Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Establishment, and Enhancement Activities. Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) issued water quality certification for NW27 in the State of Maryland. Therefore, as long as the terms and conditions of the NW27 and MDE's permit requirements are met, no additional Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) analysis is required. All conditions of the water quality certification shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

The Recommended Plan supports both the Chesapeake Bay Executive Order 13508 and Urban Waters Partnership by reconnecting urban populations with nature. The project would improve overall community health and provide an improved natural resource. Reduced streambank erosion and stabilized riparian woody vegetation would improve aesthetics and safety in the project area, and may prevent streams from causing property damage. In addition to improving overall community health, all of the stream segments have the potential to serve as living classrooms for educating students of all ages.

Public review of the draft IFR/EA will be completed on 30 April 2025. All comments submitted during the public comment period will be responded to in the Final IFR/EA.

Technical, environmental, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives.[3] Based on these report, the reviews by other Federal, State and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the recommended plan would not significantly affect the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.[4]

[3] 40 CFR 1505.2(B) requires identification of relevant factors including any essential to national policy which were balanced in the agency decision.

[4] 40 CFR 1508.13 stated the FONSI shall include an EA or a summary of it and shall note any other environmental documents related to it. If an assessment is included, the FONSI need not repeat any of the discussion in the assessment but may incorporate by reference.

Date

Francis B. Pera
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander