



# Public Notice

Public Notice Number: 200175076

Date: March 15, 2001

Comments Due: April 14, 2001

US Army Corps  
of Engineers

Sacramento District  
1325 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

In reply, please refer to the Public Notice Number

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## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

**SUBJECT:** Application for a Department of the Army permit under authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and for water quality certification under Section 401 of the CWA to discharge 4,108 cubic yards of fill into the Blue River for a fish habitat improvement project, as shown in the attached drawings.

**APPLICANT:** Mr. Sam Gary, Mt. Powell Ranch, 1670 Broadway, Suite 3300  
Denver, Colorado 80202

**LOCATION:** The project is located on the Blue River in Sections 7 & 18, Township 3 South, Range 78 West, and Sections 2 & 12, Township 3 South, Range 79 West, Summit County, Colorado. The reach of river proposed for work extends from just below the confluence of Slate Creek downstream 3.3 miles.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the project is to improve the fisheries in the Blue River on the Mt. Powell Ranch. The objective is to "decrease the width/depth ratio, reduce bank erosion at high flows, and provide optimal holding cover for fisheries during critical habitat periods". The applicant desires to have a high quality self-sustaining trout fishery on his reach of the Blue River, and the current habitat and minimum flows cannot support a quality fishery.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The applicant's consultant, Queen of the River Fish Co., evaluated the channel characteristics and habitat values of the river, electro-shocked to obtain fish population data, and sampled the macroinvertebrate community. The channel conformed to a F-3 channel (Rosgen system) with excessive width/depth ratios ranging from 38 to 77 (width 100 to 133 feet, depth 1.1 to 1.3 feet). Width/depth ratios of this magnitude indicate poor aquatic habitat as the channel is over-wide and shallow. The fish habitat surveys indicate overall fair habitat but poor habitat in the pool category. The fish population data confirm this with marginal to poor trout biomass and average size of brown trout (dominant species) of 9.57 inches. The number of age classes (5-6) of brown trout indicate natural reproduction and recruitment is occurring. Kokanee salmon, from Green Mountain Reservoir, were present in the river in fairly decent numbers and size (56% of total by weight). Excluding the salmon, the trout biomass figures for the 4 sampling sections range from a high of 34.4 lbs/acre to a low of 4.4 lbs/acre. These are poor trout biomass numbers for a river in Colorado. The food abundance and diversity from the macroinvertebrate surveys were rated as excellent. This indicates the population is limited by the available habitat in this reach, but the problem is further exacerbated by the minimum flows this reach experiences each winter due to minimal releases from the Dillon Reservoir.

The instream minimum flow of 50 cfs was realized during the winters of 1998-2000. The 50 cfs minimum will become more common as the Denver Water Board increases use of Dillon Reservoir water through transmountain diversions via the Roberts Tunnel. The applicant's design attempts to maximize the available holding water at the very low flows of 50 cfs.

To improve trout habitat, particularly at low flows, the applicant proposes to increase the frequency, depth and quality of both pools and runs on this reach. This will be accomplished by the installation of 118 large rock structures including J-Hook vanes(9), W-weirs (7), low rock cross vanes (drop structures) (7), 30-degree groins (30), bank placed rock (18), and habitat rock clusters (47). The J-hook vanes (see drawings) act to stabilize the bank and also create scour pools. The W-weirs are proposed to create pools but also maintain diversions into agricultural ditches. The 30 degree groins are designed to reduce bank erosion, and the habitat rock clusters create instream cover. Bank placed rock are primarily bank protection near structures. The J-Hooks and the groins also maintain a low flow thalweg. The proposed structures all attempt to maintain better habitat at low flow periods, while creating excellent habitat conditions at higher flows.

**ALTERNATIVES:** Alternatives include different structures or the placement of more or less structures. One alternative to consider is to delete the low rock cross vanes which appear to be typical drop structures and substitute a cross-vane with a closer angle to the bank and gaps between the boulders at the apex of the vane. Another alternative to reduce the width/depth ratio is to manipulate the channel substrate to narrow and deepen the channel in locations. Many restoration projects propose this type of work and it is successful, provided the correct channel geometry is achieved and grade control structures are employed. Alternatives that maintain adequate riffle habitat will be examined. The no action alternative would not achieve the project purpose of improving the fishery.

**AREA DESCRIPTION:** The Blue River flows through a montane habitat in a fairly incised channel. The elevation of the project area is approximately 8,100 feet above msl. The riparian community along the river is comprised of narrowleaf cottonwood (**Populus angustifolia**) with some blue spruce (**Picea pungens**). The riparian corridor is fairly narrow as steep slopes in excess of 30% rise abruptly from the channel.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** The applicant has collected extensive data on the fishery, macroinvertebrate population and the channel condition. The applicant proposes to monitor the fish and macroinvertebrate populations and survey channel cross-sections 2 and 4 years after project completion. Although the applicant proposes to increase the number of pools on this reach, adequate riffle habitat should be maintained as pools will be created every 5 to 7 bankfull widths. Wetlands will not be impacted by this project as all work occurs in the channel.

The applicant has requested water quality certification from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Water Quality Control Division in accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. Written comments on water quality certification should be submitted to Mr. Phil Hegeman, Planning and Standards Section, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Water Quality Control Division, 4300 Cherry Creek Drive South, Denver, Colorado, 80222-1530, on or before **April 14, 2001**.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Water Quality Control Division also reviews each project with respect to the anti-degradation provision in state regulations. For further information regarding anti-degradation provision, please contact Mr. Hegeman at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Water Quality Control Division, telephone (303) 692-3575. The latest published version of the National Register of Historic Places and its monthly supplements have been reviewed and there are no places either listed or recommended as eligible which would be affected. This activity would not affect any threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat. The District Engineer has made this determination based on information provided by the applicant and on the Corps' preliminary investigation.

Interested parties are invited to submit written comments on or before **April 14, 2001**. Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing.

The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

For activities involving 404 discharges, a permit will be denied if the discharge does not comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's Section 404(b) (1) guidelines. Subject to the preceding sentence and any other applicable guidelines or criteria, a permit will be granted unless the District Engineer determines it would be contrary to the public interest.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Written comments on this permit application should be submitted to the District Engineer at the address listed above. Please furnish a copy of your written comments to the attention of Mr. Michael Claffey, Western Colorado Regulatory Office, U.S. Army Engineer District, Sacramento, 402 Rood Avenue, Room 142, Grand Junction, Colorado 81501-2563. For further information, please contact Mr. Michael Claffey, at telephone number (970) 243-1199, extension 13, or e-mail [mclaffey@spk.usace.army.mil](mailto:mclaffey@spk.usace.army.mil).

Michael J. Walsh  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer

Enclosures: Drawing(s)