



Public Notice

US Army Corps
of Engineers

Sacramento District
1325 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

Number: 200400683

Date: May 6, 2005

Comments Due: May 20, 2005

In reply, please refer to the Public Notice Number

Subject: The US Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, (Corps) is evaluating a permit application to reconstruct Steamboat Creek through the Bella Vista Ranch, which would result in impacts to waters of the United States. This notice is meant to inform interested parties of the proposed activity and to solicit comments. The Corps is particularly interested in receiving comments related to the proposal's probable impacts on the affected aquatic environment and the secondary and cumulative effects. This notice may also be viewed at the Corps web site at <http://www.spk.usace.army.mil/regulatory.html>.

Authority: This application is being evaluated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for the discharge of fill material in regulated waters of the United States.

Applicant: Kyle Collinsworth, Centex Homes, 9600 Prototype Court, Reno, Nevada 89521

Location: The project is located in south Reno in Sections 3 & 10, Township 18 North, Range 20 East, Washoe County, Nevada, on the Steamboat USGS Topographic Quadrangle.

Project Description: Centex Homes is proposing to restore a segment of Steamboat Creek within a 364 acre parcel of the Bella Vista Ranch. The attached map shows the project boundary and the location of the affected creek segments, all of which will be relocated into one newly constructed channel. This proposed restoration will be similar to the creek restoration project currently occurring on the Nevada TriPartners Damonte Ranch development where approximately 7000 feet on the Damonte Ranch are being restored. The current proposal will restore approximately 5429 feet of Steamboat Creek whose current average width is about 25 feet. The attached map shows the current location of the primary channel of Steamboat Creek (C1); water that flows into this segment will be diverted into the newly constructed channel. The other creek segments, C2 through C5, will also be consolidated into one tributary segment that is believed to be the original location of Steamboat Creek; their average width is 6-8 feet. No wetlands shown on the attached map will be filled. Wetland WM3 that would have been in the middle of a road alignment will be avoided because Nevada TriPartners offered to move Rio Wrangler Parkway on their property to the east that will now cause the road on the Centex Homes project to be east of WM3.

Creek segment C2 is approximately 7536 feet long with an average width of 6 feet, however only 3928 feet will be impacted; the southern segment which flows east of wetland WM1 will remain (and is outside the current project proposal). Creek segment C3 is approximately 1819 feet long; segment C4 is approximately 4445 feet; and segment C5 is approximately 2243 feet long. The impacts to C2 and C5 could be considered temporary impacts because this is the approximate location of the realigned / restored creek that is being proposed by Centex Homes.

The restored creek will be the base of a 240-foot wide flood conveyance corridor (as measured from top of bank to top of bank); this will become a deed restricted area, comprising more than 55 acres, and remain undeveloped (except for the potential placement of public use facilities like bike / pedestrian paths, etc.). See the attached drawing for typical cross sections and dimensions.

The restored creek will meander at the base of this corridor and be approximately 30 feet wide and 1-2 feet deep and approximately 7700 feet long. Additionally, approximately 4 acres of adjacent wetlands will be created. These wetlands will be designed such that they will be point bars placed on the inside of the meandering new Steamboat Creek. Before construction and where appropriate, topsoil from the project site that appear to have desirable hydrophytic vegetation and associated mycorrhiza will be salvaged and stockpiled and used as a base for the created wetlands. The wetland areas will be planted with native plant species. The rest of the area within the corridor will be planted with native upland species; this area will be approximately 46 acres and function as an upland buffer for the creek and adjacent wetlands. If the project is authorized, all construction will occur when the segments C2-5 are dry or contain low flows.

Project Purpose: To restore Steamboat Creek to its historic location; to create 100-year event flood conveyance capability adjacent to Steamboat Creek, and restore habitat, water quality, and flood storage functions of Steamboat Creek and its adjacent wetlands.

Background information: Several decades ago, Steamboat Creek, like most creeks in the Truckee Meadows, have been heavily manipulated to facilitate irrigating the meadows by channelizing the creeks to make them more efficient for delivering water. The existing Steamboat Creek (C1) in the project area is incapable of conveying major storm events. Additionally the creek is not in the lowest part of the Truckee Meadows valley. The proposed project will correct this situation by restoring / realigning Steamboat Creek into what is believed to be the original location. Additionally, as stated above, most of C2 and C5 are likely remnants of the historic Steamboat Creek. Channels C3, C4, and the southern half of C2 are likely remnant side channels of Steamboat Creek or artificially created drainage ditches that were constructed to facilitate irrigation and convey flood-irrigated waters back to Steamboat Creek. If the project is authorized and all flows from C1 are diverted into the proposed alignment, segment C1 (and the segment extending north for approximately 2700 feet) will no longer be considered a regulated waters of the United States. Centex Homes is proposing a housing development in the southern third of the Bella Vista Ranch and will fill this segment (C1) as they proceed with their development plans for the area.

Environmental Setting. The Bella Vista Ranch is an historic Truckee Meadows ranch that used flood irrigation water to promote favorable grazing conditions on their 1700-acre ranch. On the project site, irrigation water was supplied by realigning and diverting Steamboat Creek flows. There appear to be (saline) seeps on the east side of the ranch that caused the formation of wetlands (WM 1 & 3). The project area is a flat to gently sloping, broad alluvial valley with alkaline soils. The vegetation is dominated by forage grasses with some sagebrush-associated shrubs, typical of Nevada. The site is also quite infested with perennial pepperweed (tall whitetop). Several decades of prolonged flood irrigation has altered the natural condition of the vegetation community.

Water Quality Certification: A permit for the described work will not be issued until certification, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, has been granted or is waived from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP). A waiver will be deemed to occur if the state fails or refuses to act on the request for certification within 60 days.

Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation: The activity's impact on the public interest will include application of the 404 (b) (1) guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency.

Historic Properties: In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Act), the Corps has been coordinating this proposal with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and local Indian Tribes. Any cultural resources that could be impacted by the proposal and are deemed potentially eligible for protection under the Act will be mitigated or avoided.

Endangered Species: Preliminary review for species protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 844) indicates that the described activity will not affect listed species or their critical habitat. Consultation under Section 7 of the Act is not required for the described activity.

Evaluation Factors: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the described 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 described activity, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the described activity will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain 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. The activity's impact on the public interest will include application of the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (40 CFR Part 230).

The Corps 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 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 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.

Submitting Comments: Comments must be received on or before the expiration date (located above) to be considered in subsequent actions on this application. Please note that all comment letters received are subject to release to the public through the Freedom of Information Act. Anyone whose interests may be affected by the proposed work is invited to submit favorable or unfavorable written comments to:

Richard Gebhart, Project Manager
US Army Corps of Engineers
Reno Regulatory Office
300 Booth Street, Room 2103
Reno, Nevada 89509-1361
Email: richard.a.gebhart@usace.army.mil

Public Hearing: Before the expiration date of this notice, anyone may request, in writing, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests shall specifically state the reason(s) for holding a public hearing. If the District Engineer determines that the information received in response to this notice is inadequate for thorough evaluation, a public hearing may be warranted. If a public hearing is warranted, interested parties will be notified of the time, date, and location.

Additional Information: If you have questions or need additional information please contact the applicant or the Corps project manager Richard Gebhart, 775-784-5307, richard.a.gebhart@usace.army.mil.

Additional Requirements: State law requires that leases, easements, or permits be obtained for certain works or activity in the described waters. These state requirements must be met, where applicable, and a Department of the Army permit must be obtained before any work within the applicable statutory authority, previously indicated, may be accomplished. Other local governmental agencies may also have ordinances or requirements which must be satisfied before the work is accomplished.

Attachments