



Public Notice

US Army Corps
of Engineers
Sacramento District
1325 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

Number: 200500253
Date: April 25, 2006
Comments Due: May 25, 2006

SUBJECT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, (Corps) is evaluating a permit application to construct the Cohasset Road Widening Project, which would result in approximately 0.467 acre of direct impacts and 1.319 acres of indirect impacts to waters of the United States, including wetlands, in and adjacent to Sheep Hollow Creek and/or adjacent to the Sycamore Creek. This notice is to inform interested parties of the proposed activity and to solicit comments. 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 dredged or fill material in waters of the United States.

APPLICANT: Cliff Sellers, City of Chico
Community Services Department
411 Main Street
P.O. Box 3420
Chico, California 95927
530-879-6502
csellers@ci.chico.ca.us

LOCATION: The project site is located in Chico in Sections 2, 3, and 10, Township 22 North, Range 1 East; and Section 34, Township 23 North, Range 1 East, Butte County, California and can be seen on the Richardson Springs USGS Topographic Quadrangle.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant is proposing to widen and improve approximately 2.3 miles of Cohasset Road. The project area spans Cohasset Road from the northern end of Sycamore Creek Bridge to the northern end of Ryan Avenue. Beginning at the southern project limit, Cohasset Road would be widened to four lanes to match the existing Sycamore Creek Bridge lane configuration; the widening would continue to Airpark Boulevard, where the roadway width would transition down from four lanes to two lanes. The widening would result in two 12-foot lanes and 8-foot shoulders in both directions with no curb at the edge of pavement. Street lighting is proposed at the intersections. The project includes the replacement of Sheep Hollow Bridge and the adjacent bike path bridge with a single combined structure.

Modifications to the existing drainage system include installing longitudinal culverts along the sides of the road, where the road right-of-way is minimal; installing cross culverts along some project segments to prevent water from overtopping the roadway and to move drainage away from erosive soils; creating small detention basins and developing bio-swale type roadside ditches, with gentle side slopes (a maximum of 3:1); and hydroseeding to prevent erosion.

Intersection improvements are proposed at Thorntree Drive, the driveway to the City compost yard, Two Oaks Drive, Boeing Avenue, Airpark Boulevard, and Ryan Avenue.

The applicant proposes to fill 0.467 acre of waters of the United States, including ephemeral drainages, intermittent drainages, and a seasonal wetland. Based on the available information, the overall project purpose is to widen and improve Cohasset Road. The applicant believes that the proposed project is needed to improve system reliability for freight movement, reduce existing and projected traffic congestion, upgrade roadway design to meet current standards, and improve drainage design. The attached drawing provides additional project details.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Environmental Setting. There are approximately 6.30 acres of seasonal wetlands, vernal pools, intermittent drainages, and ephemeral drainages within the project area. The vegetation assemblages occurring in the project area include blue oak woodland and California annual grassland. Blue oak woodland on-site consists of a dominant overstory of blue oaks, which form an open canopy over a community typically consisting of annual grasses and forbs. California annual grassland on-site consists of a myriad of native and non-native annual plant species. Dominant plant species within the project area include wild oats, soft chess, medusahead, and rye grass.

Habitat types within the project area include northern hardpan vernal pools, seasonal wetlands, and riverine habitat. Northern hardpan vernal pools occur within depressions occurring on soils such as Corning, Red Bluff, Redding, and San Joaquin soil series within and around the Great Central Valley. Vernal pools are concentrated in the southeastern portion of the project area. Dominant plant species occurring within the vernal pools in the project area include manna grass, vernal pool buttercup, spikerush, water-starwort, coyote thistle, and annual hairgrass. Seasonal wetlands are found sporadically throughout the project area. Plant species observed in seasonal wetlands include perennial ryegrass and Vasey's coyote thistle. Both Sycamore Creek and Sheep Hollow Creek flow through the project area. Sycamore Creek is located north of Eaton Road. Sheep Hollow Creek crosses the project area north of Thorntree Drive. Both creeks carry intermittent flows. Vegetation along these creeks consists of Fremont cottonwoods and narrow-leaved willows. The project area also contains several ephemeral drainages. In general, these ephemeral drainages lack vegetation but hydrophytic plants such as tall flatsedge, cattail, and moth mullein occur adjacent to these drainages.

Surrounding land uses consist of commercial development, open space, and the Chico Municipal Airport. Portions of the open space are part of the airport. Land immediately adjacent to Cohasset Road is fallow roadside land.

Alternatives. The applicant has provided information concerning project alternatives. The applicant developed four alternatives to meet the purpose and need of improving safety and traffic operations. The four alternatives considered include the preferred alternative, road widening to the west, symmetrical road widening, and an east-side culvert ditch along Cohasset Road. Additional information concerning project alternatives may be available from the applicant or their agent. Other alternatives may develop during the review process for this permit application. All reasonable project alternatives, in particular those which may be less

damaging to the aquatic environment, will be considered.

Mitigation. The Corps requires that applicants consider and use all reasonable and practical measures to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources. If the applicant is unable to avoid or minimize all impacts, the Corps may require compensatory mitigation. The applicant has proposed to compensate for indirect effects to approximately 1.319 acres of potential vernal pool habitat by preserving suitable tadpole and fairy shrimp habitat at a 2:1 ratio (total of 2.638 acres). The applicant proposes to purchase vernal pool preservation credits from Dove Ridge Mitigation Bank. In addition, the applicant proposes to preserve directly impacted Butte County Meadowfoam (BCM) habitat at a ratio of 10:1 (total of 0.66 acre) and indirectly impacted BCM habitat at a 5:1 ratio (total of 2.525 acres). BCM preservation credits would be purchased from the Dove Ridge Mitigation Bank. The applicant proposes to purchase mitigation credits prior to any ground-disturbing activities in the project area. A portion of the impacts to intermittent and ephemeral drainages would be mitigated for by creating a drainage ditch of the same size and capacity as the existing ditch. The remaining impacts to seasonal wetlands and other waters would be mitigated at an off-site location or mitigation bank.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORIZATIONS: Water quality certification or a waiver, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), is required for this project. The applicant indicated that they will apply for certification. The applicant will also apply for a 1600 permit from the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), a Reclamation Board permit, and a Consistency Determination from DFG. The project complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, per correspondence from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), dated November 18, 2005, with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). SHPO determined that the two properties on-site (CA-BUT-2655H, the Thomasson Ranch Rock Wall and CA-BUT-2770H, the Sacramento Northern Railroad Spur) are not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

HISTORIC PROPERTIES: Based on the available information (including SHPO's November 18, 2005 correspondence with Caltrans), cultural resources eligible for the NRHP are not within the project's area of potential effect.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: The proposed activity may affect Federally-listed endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat. The Corps will initiate consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as appropriate.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT: The proposed project will not adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The above determinations are based on information provided by the applicant and our preliminary review.

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: Written comments, referencing Public Notice 200500253, must be submitted to the office listed below on or before May 25, 2006:

Thomas J. Cavanaugh, Sacramento Valley Office Chief
US Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
Sacramento Valley Office
1325 J Street, Room 1480
Sacramento, California 95814-2922
Email: Thomas.J.Cavanaugh@usace.army.mil

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. Anyone may request, in writing, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests shall specifically state, with particularity, the reason(s) for holding a public hearing. If the Corps 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. Please note that all comment letters received are subject to release to the public through the Freedom of Information Act. If you have questions or need additional information please contact the applicant or the Corps' project manager Thomas Cavanaugh, 916-557-5261, Thomas.J.Cavanaugh@usace.army.mil.

Attachment: January 26, 2006 Wetland Delineation Impacts Map