



US Army Corps
of Engineers

Sacramento District
1325 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

Public Notice

Number: 200575463

Date: August 26, 2005

Comments Due: September 26, 2005

SUBJECT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, (Corps) is evaluating a permit application to construct the Telluride Airport Expansion project, which would result in impacts to approximately 6 acres of waters of the United States, including wetlands. This notice is to inform interested parties of the proposed activity and to solicit comments. This notice may 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: Telluride Regional Airport
1500 Last Dollar Road, Suite 1
Telluride, Colorado 81435
970-728-5313

AGENT: Kimley-Horn and Associates
Attn: Mike Hess
7878 North 16th St., Suite 300
Phoenix, AZ 85020
602-944-5500

LOCATION: The project site is located approximately four miles west of the Town of Telluride in Sections 30 & 31, Township 43 North, Range 9 West, San Miguel County, Colorado, and can be seen on the Gray Head USGS Topographic Quadrangle.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant is proposing to reconstruct Runway 9-27 in its existing alignment to meet longitudinal grade standards. To do so, both runway ends will be lowered and the center of the runway will be filled and raised. Runway 9-27 will be lengthened 450 feet (new total length of 7,320') and the existing 100-foot width will be maintained. The runway safety area will be increased 200 feet on each side of the runway. In two areas along the north and south sides of the runway, slope stabilization efforts will be required in past slide areas to accommodate the new grading and fill. Additional improvements include the relocation of Taxiway A 400 feet north of runway centerline, construction of a vehicular tunnel below the runway at midfield to allow access to the south side of the airport, and relocation of the de-ice pad to an area just north of reconstructed Taxiway A. This work will impact 5.94 acres of waters of the United States, the majority of which is located primarily south of the runway. Of this total impact, wetland impacts equal 4.04 acres and a 1.9-acre fire pond will be impacted south of the runway.

Based on the available information, the overall project purpose is to reconstruct Runway 9-27 to meet FAA design and safety standards for the existing mix of aircraft (business and similar sized regional jets) using the Telluride Regional Airport. This work includes replacing the aging, deteriorated pavement surface. [NOTE: Pavement reconstruction does not allow larger commercial or general aviation aircraft to operate at the airport. The pavement strength and runway length prevent larger aircraft use.] The applicant has identified a need to update the airfield to meet safety design standards in accordance with FAA requirements. The attached drawings provide additional project details.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Environmental Setting. Telluride Airport, approximately 509 acres, is located on Deep Creek Mesa at an elevation of 9,078' msl and is the highest commercial service airport in the United States. Existing airport facilities consists of one runway (Runway 9-27) which is 6,870' long, 100' wide, and oriented in an east-west direction. A small rock quarry operation is present on the west end of the property. A fire-water pond and associated wetland is situated south of the runway for potential aircraft emergencies and serves as water augmentation source. The undeveloped Diamond Ranch is located to the north. The subject site is also bound to the east and south by undeveloped land owned by Aldasoro Ranch. The U.S. Forest Service land bounds the subject site to the west (steep canyon area which drains into Deep Creek) and is proposed for acquisition through land transfer.

A wetland delineation was approved by the Corps for this property in September 2002. Seven wetland areas, totaling 6.3 acres, were identified and are classified as palustrine emergent wetlands mostly dominated by sedges. Wetland areas include hillside seeps, stormwater drainages, and a pond and associated wetland shore and drainage. A Wetland Functions and Values Assessment was performed and assessed and ranked 10 functions and values including wildlife habitat, flood attenuation, surface water storage, sediment/nutrient/toxicant retention and removal, sediment/shoreline stabilization, food chain support, groundwater discharge/recharge, uniqueness, and education potential. The most functional wetlands occur with the fire-pond and associated wetlands (5.1 acres) located south of the runway. There are no bird deterrents in place on the pond and birds have been observed on occasion. Although the area contains good wildlife habitat features, it only received a moderate rating due to lack of wildlife use. This limited use is mostly attributed to the 8-foot wildlife fencing that surrounds the airport.

Alternatives. The applicant has provided information concerning project alternatives. These include several On Airport Development, Off Airport Development, and No Action alternatives. These alternatives were eliminated due to their lack of ability to meet project purpose and need or because they are considered unreasonable (such as excessive cost, land acquisition, potential noise and social impacts, and so forth). 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 on-site compensatory mitigation in the amount of 5.94 acres adjacent to (south of) the runway. The goals of the compensatory wetland mitigation plan are to re-create the natural

drainage that occurred within the project site and create a palustrine emergent wetland that replicates many of the functions lost. In the vicinity of the open water fire pond, a small stream channel will be re-created to allow water flow from surface runoff and natural springs to the system located downstream. The design of the new wetlands would reduce the threat of aircraft/bird collisions due to the removal of the fire pond (1.9 acres). Other impacted wetlands would be reconfigured; reshaped; and planted, seeded and mulched. An erosion control plan with best management practices would be implemented to protect existing wetlands and waterways. Mitigation construction is targeted between the years 2006 and 2009. The three year window for construction is dependent upon FAA issuing grants for the runway safety area improvements at the airport. It is planned that the earth work contractor selected for airport improvements would perform the rough grading for the wetland creation areas and stream restoration. Monitoring of the site will occur through annual reports submitted to the Corps with contingencies identified if needed until a non-weedy herbaceous wetland plant cover reaches 80 percent. The applicant is committed to using the site for wetland mitigation and would project the site in perpetuity.

This proposed on-site wetland mitigation is not anticipated to be a wildlife attractant and will likely be less of an attractant than the current fire water pond. Historical airport operation records required by the FAA and recollection by airport management indicate wildlife hazard management has not been an issue for this airport. The benefits of this on-site mitigation plan is that impacted wetland soil and vegetation materials may be reused and the mitigation location and water supply help to increase the opportunity for success. The target functions to be replaced include the creation of general habitat for native wildlife species and sediment/nutrient/toxicant removal.

Nine other wetland mitigation alternatives were considered and eliminated. These include:

- 1) participation in the Tamarisk Eradication Project in San Miguel County by the Nature Conservancy and Bureau of Land Management;
- 2) State Highway 154 Washout Rehabilitation Project sponsored by BLM;
- 3) private land four miles east of Placerville;
- 4) six privately owned lands;
- 5) Idarado mine site east of Telluride;
- 6) In lieu fee with Valley Corp/Telluride Golf and Ski Company;
- 7) San Miguel County's Down Valley Park;
- 8) Valley Floor area west of Telluride; and
- 9) Town of Telluride Pearl property.

These options were eliminated for a variety of reasons ranging from lack of water, out-of-kind mitigation, potential for litigation, private land restrictions/grazing issues, and timing concerns. Please contact the applicant or their agent for additional information on mitigation alternatives.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORIZATIONS: Water quality certification or a waiver, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDOH), is required for this project. The applicant has indicated they have applied for certification.

The applicant must also comply with San Miguel County land use code requirements.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES: A pedestrian cultural resource survey was performed by SWCA Environmental Consultants in September 2004. Results of the survey revealed one isolated find within the proposed project area. This site consisted of one middle-stage quartzite biface (a prehistoric stone tool that has been flaked on both faces used for chopping or butchering) and three flakes. The area has been disturbed due to the construction of the airport, and the cultural material found is most likely in a secondary deposit. In a letter dated November 15, 2004, the State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with FAA's determination that the proposed project will not affect any historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a letter dated June 3, 2005, stating their concurrence with a Biological Assessment (BA) prepared by Coffman Associates. The Service concurs with the BA conclusion that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the Gunnison sage-grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*), Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), boreal toad (*Bufo boreas boreas*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), and the Canada lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*).

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 200575463, must be submitted to the office listed below on or before **September 26, 2005:**

Susan Bachini Nall, Project Manager
US Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
Colorado/Gunnison Basin Regulatory Office
400 Rood Avenue, Room 142
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501-2563
Email: Susan.Nall@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 Susan Bachini Nall, 970-243-1199, extension 16, Susan.Nall@usace.army.mil.

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