Public Notice

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

Public Notice Number: SPK-2008-00547
Date: June 4, 2008
Comments Due: July 7, 2008
In reply, please refer to the Public Notice Number

SUBJECT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, (Corps) is evaluating a permit application to construct the Lower American River Spawning Gravel Augmentation project, which would result in impacts to approximately 20.6 acres of waters of the United States, in or adjacent to the American River. 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: United State Bureau of Reclamation
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825
Attn: Mr. John Hannon; 916-978-5524

LOCATION: The project site is located at several locations within the American River, between RM 13.6 and 23, within Sacramento County. The location for each site is:

Sites	Location	Coordinates
Spawning Gravel Addition Sites		
1. Nimbus Basin	RM 23.0	38° 38' 11.69" N 121° 13' 18.05" W
2. Upper Sailor Bar-Upstream	RM 22.5	38° 38' 03.58" N 121° 13' 45.91" W
3. Upper Sailor Bar-Downstream	RM 22.5	38° 38' 03.58" N 121° 13' 45.91" W
4. Lower Sailor Bar	RM 21.3	38° 38' 02.56" N 121° 14' 36.57" W
5. Upper Sunrise	RM 21.4	38° 38' 13.61" N 121° 15' 06.59" W
6. Upper Sunrise Side Channel	RM 21.2	38° 38' 17.29" N 121° 15' 19.00" W
7. Goethe Park	RM 13.6	38° 35' 30.48" N 121° 19' 52.05" W
Side Channel Sites		
1. Nimbus Shoals	RM 23.0	38° 38' 07.64" N 121° 13' 19.88" W
2. Upper Sailor Bar	RM 22.5	38° 38' 05.18" N 121° 13' 19.88" W
4. Upper Sunrise Side Channel	RM 21.2	38° 38' 15.73" N 121° 15' 19.74" W
Gravel Sources Sites		
Mississippi Bar	North side of Lake Natoma	38° 38' 56.98" N 121° 12' 22.61" W
Lower Sailor Bar	RM 21.3	38° 38' 20.08" N 121° 15' 06.78" W

Notes
Coordinates Datum = WGS84 (Google Earth)
RM = River Miles from Confluence with the Sacramento River (A Boating Trail Guide to the American River Parkway)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed project is to conduct gravel augmentation at 7 sites and construct side channels at 3 sites along the American River from RM 13.6 to 23.

1. **Gravel Augmentation:** The applicant is proposing to place approximately 10,000 to 15,000 cubic yards of gravel yearly into the American River. In order to protect Chinook salmon and steelhead habitat, the applicant is proposing to conduct all in stream work between July and September. All gravel proposed to be placed within the river would be uncrushed, rounded natural river rock with no sharp edges. In order to conduct the proposed gravel augmentation, the gravel would be transported to stockpile areas near the river, where it would then be placed in the river using front end loaders, dump trucks, or possibly a conveyor system.

   The proposed sites for gravel augmentation include:

   a. Nimbus Basin: This site begins approximately 60 yards downstream of Nimbus Dam at RM (RM) 23 and extends approximately 190 yards downstream. This area is highly scoured with substrate consisting mainly of large rocks. Within this site, the applicant is proposing to restore approximately 3.3 acres.

   b. Upper Sailor Bar – Downstream: Site 3 is located at Sailor Bar, adjacent to the lower portion of the American River Fish Hatchery at about RM 22.5. It extends from just upstream of the USGS cable across the river to the end of the hatchery, a distance of about 95 yards. The upper portion of this reach on the south side is quite deep with large rocks. The lower end becomes shallower with large rocks. There is some salmon spawning on the north side of the river where the water is shallower and the substrate is more desirable. In the past there has been steelhead and Chinook salmon spawning against the south bank, however most of the spawning-sized gravel at this location has washed away, reducing the use of the area for spawning. Within this site, the applicant is proposing to restore approximately 1.5 acres.

   c. Upper Sailor Bar – Downstream: This site is located at Sailor Bar from the lower portion of the hatchery settling basins, extending about 165 yards down stream at about RM 22.4. A portion of this reach is heavily scoured. The substrate is characterized as large rock with some areas of marginal spawning habitat. There is some spawning along the north and south banks. Within this site, the applicant is proposing to restore approximately 2.7 acres.

   d. Lower Sailor Bar: This site is located downstream of the island at lower Sailor Bar at about RM 21.8. The existing gravel at the site is too large for spawning. The area provided spawning habitat in the past, but has decreased over time as scouring has occurred. Within this site, the applicant is proposing to restore approximately 3.7 acres.

   e. Upper Sunrise: This site is locate approximately 500 feet upstream of the island at the Upper Sunrise Recreation Area, at about RM 21.4. An existing gravel bar along the south side of the river includes suitable spawning habitat used by salmon. The proposed project would extend the bar laterally across the river. Within this site, the applicant is proposing to restore approximately 1.2 acres.

   f. Upper Sunrise Side Channel: This site is located at the upstream end of the island that forms the Upper Sunrise Side Channel at about RM 21.2. There is a riffle at this location and recently the portion of the riffle adjacent to the island has eroded, which has reduced the surface elevation of the backwater of the riffle. This, in turn, has dewatered the side channel at lower flows.

Consideration is being given to fill in the eroded riffle; however, it is not known whether the channel would continue to erode. Within this site, the applicant is proposing to restore approximately 0.7 acres.

g. American River Parkway, South (formally Goethe Park): This site is located between the Jed Smith Bridge at American River Parkway, South and the Arden Rapids at about RM 13.6. Historically, this site provided spawning habitat, however, scouring has removed the suitable sized gravel and now it is little used for spawning. Within this site, the applicant is proposing to restore approximately 5.1 acres.

2. **Side Channel Construction:** The applicant is also proposing to construct side channels at three locations within the Lower American River. All of the side channels would be between 1 and 2.5 feet deep in the flow range of 1,500 cfs to 2,200 cfs. The channels widths are proposed to vary in width between 15 to 30 feet, with water velocities of 1.5 fps to 3.0 fps planned. The proposed sites for side channels include:

a. Nimbus Shoals: This site is located on the south side of the river, at approximately RM 22.9. The project would start in the Nimbus Dam Stilling basin north of the proposed fish ladder and cross the bar to the river. This side channel would measure approximately 350 yards.

b. Upper Sailor Bar: This side is located on the north side of the river at about RM 22.5. The proposed side channel would begin just downstream of the United States Geological Survey cable crossing, follow the north side of the bar, and then cut across the bar to the river. This side channel would measure approximately 210 yards in length. The side channel is proposed to measure approximately 20 feet in width and would involve the excavation of approximately 4,000 cubic yards of material that would be spread on the adjacent bar.

c. Upper Sunrise Side Channel: This site is located on the south side of the river, located at approximately RM 21.2. According to the applicant, this site had previously been an excellent steelhead spawning area, however, in the past year, the river has down cut near the head of the side channel, lowering the water level, dewatering the side channel at typical winter flows. This side channel would measure approximately 410 yards in length.

The proposed project would result in the placement of approximately 75,000 cubic yards of spawning-sized gravel into waters of the United States for the creation of 1.2 acres of new side channels, 0.8 acres of restoration in existing side channels, 0.4 acres of roads, and 18.2 acres of restoration in the American River.

Based on the available information, the overall project purpose is to increase and improve salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat by replenishing spawning gravel and establishing additional side-channel habitat at new restoration sites in the Lower American River between Nimbus Dam and Arden Rapids. The applicant believes there is a need to improve salmon and steelhead spawning within the Lower American River. The attached drawings provide additional project details.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Environmental Setting. The site in question is located within the Lower American River, between RM 13.6 and 23. The project site contains approximately 44.69 acres of the American River and 0.79 acres of seasonal wetlands. A verified wetland delineation has not been completed by the Corps. The

wetlands on the site are characterized by hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and positive indicators of hydrology, including surface water, saturated soils, and algal matting. The vegetation within the wetlands on the site consist of: marsh spikerush (*Eleocharis macrostachya*), dock (*Rumex pulcher*) and Italian ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum*). The Lower American River, within the proposed project area has been identified by the Sacramento District Corps of Engineers as a Traditional Navigable Water. The American River has been designated a Recreational River under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1980, which provides national recognition and protection of the scenic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural and recreational values of the Lower American River. The Lower American River is heavily used for recreational fishing, kayaking, canoeing and boating, and is adjacent to the American River Parkway, which consists of a 4000-acre parkway extending 30-miles along the American River, and attracts more than 5 million visitors annually for recreational opportunities.

Alternatives. The applicant has not provided information concerning project alternatives. 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 mitigation in order to minimize impacts to aquatic resources by utilizing best management practices (BMP's).

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORIZATIONS: Water quality certification or a waiver, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board is required for this project. The applicant has not yet applied for certification.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES: The applicant has completed a cultural resources survey of the Area of Potential Effect for the proposed project. Following completion of the cultural resources report, the applicant will initiate consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as appropriate.

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

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT: The proposed project may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat. The applicant has initiated consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service, pursuant to Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as appropriate.

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 SPK-2008-00547 must be submitted to the office listed below on or before **July 7, 2008**.

Lisa M. Gibson, Project Manager
US Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
Sacramento Office
1325 J Street, Room 1480
Sacramento, California 95814 2922
Email: lisa.m.gibson2@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 Lisa M. Gibson, 916-557-5288, lisa.m.gibson2@usace.army.mil.

Attachments: 9 drawings