



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, SACRAMENTO DISTRICT  
1325 J STREET  
SACRAMENTO CA 95814-2922

Operations and Readiness Branch

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ALTER A U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
PROJECT UNDER SECTION 408**

**TITLE:** Truckee River Fish Passage Project – Steamboat Dam Retrofit (CTWCD-18-01)

**PUBLIC NOTICE COMMENT PERIOD:**

Begins: April 11, 2018

Ends: May 10, 2018

**REQUESTER:** In compliance with U.S.C. Title 33, Chapter 9, Subchapter 1, Section 408, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Requester; USFWS) has requested permission through the Carson Truckee Water Conservancy District (non-federal sponsor of the federally authorized project) from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to alter the Truckee River and Tributaries Project, an existing federal flood risk management project, authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1954.

**LOCATION:** The proposed project is located at the Steamboat Dam on the Truckee River on the Nevada side of the California-Nevada state border approximately 3.5 miles upstream of the town of Verdi, Nevada, in Washoe County (Attachment 1).

**REQUESTER'S PROPOSED ACTION:** The purpose of the proposed project is to enhance aquatic organism passage along the Truckee River, with an emphasis on native fish migration as part of the National Aquatic Connectivity Initiative. The proposed project would also seek to enhance recreational boater safety. The project would consist of a sequence of step-pools, two rock grade control dams, and two roller-compacted concrete (RCC) dams downstream of the existing dam, extending approximately 260 feet down the Truckee River channel (Attachment 2). The step-pool sequence would provide four approximately 20 foot long pools each approximately three feet deep. The rock grade control dams would consist of 36-60 inch diameter rock, with smaller 8-36 inch rock riprap placed 4 feet deep between the rock grade control dams and the RCC dams. One foot of 12 inch minus rock placed atop the RCC dams would cover the concrete and give the dam a natural surface. Through the project site, appropriately sized rock riprap would be placed to the 100-year flood level. As much as possible given its limited supply, the surface layer of rocks would consist of rounded stones as an added safety feature for boaters. The water surface elevation at the top of the step-pool sequence would match the water elevation of the existing Steamboat Dam to avoid altering the function of the diversion. Once completed, the new RCC dams and rock grade control dams would create a gradual increase in elevation up to the base of the existing dam.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PROPOSED ACTION:** Habitats in the proposed project area consist of riparian shrubland close to the Truckee River, which transitions to pine forest and sagebrush shrubland farther from the river. Much of the vegetation is disturbed due to access roads for the dam and diversion, previous construction disturbance, and rip rap along

the river banks. Surveys of the project area did not indicate the presence of any special status plant or animal species. Two species of fish listed under the federal Endangered Species Act are present in the lower reaches of the Truckee River. The federally endangered cui-ui is restricted to the lower Truckee River near Pyramid Lake and the federally threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT) is unlikely to occur in the project area due to multiple fish passage barriers downstream of the proposed project. The USFWS and Nevada Department of Wildlife stock LCT downstream of the project area; however, it is unlikely that these stocked fish would move upstream into the project area due to the Verdi Dam, which acts as a fish passage barrier. However, it is possible that the proposed project could disturb LCT if they were present in the project area during construction. Construction activities have been timed during lower flows to avoid LCT spawning and migration and reduce their potential presence in the project area. Additionally, the project could affect LCT through short-term disturbances of riverine and riparian habitats and mobilization of sediment. However, all disturbed areas would be re-contoured to a natural shape and re-vegetated with appropriate native plant material. Potential long-term beneficial effects to LCT are that the project would result in improved fish passage and enhanced riverine and riparian habitat conditions. It is expected that project best management practices would reduce or eliminate all potential impacts of the project on LCT; the proposed project is not expected to adversely affect LCT. The USFWS conducted an intra-Service consultation pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act for potential effects to LCT; concurrence on the effects determination was received from the USFWS on August 11, 2017.

A cultural resources survey was completed for the proposed project, no archaeological materials were identified in the project area. The USFWS determined that the Steamboat irrigation system, which includes the dam, intake structure, and canal, is eligible to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A, which includes properties associated with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of our history. Although the Steamboat irrigation system is eligible for listing on the NRHP, the USFWS determined that there would be no adverse effect to this property. Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the USFWS initiated consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The USFWS received a letter, dated December 1, 2017, from the SHPO concurring with their determinations of eligibility and effects. Additionally, the USFWS mailed a letter, dated August 3, 2017, to the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. To date, no response has been received.

The Truckee River in this area is used by recreational boaters, who must currently portage around the Steamboat Dam. Additionally, a portion of the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway is located on Quilici Ranch Road, the road that would be used to access the project site during construction. Prior to the start of construction, public announcements and communication to local rafting companies would inform boaters that the river would be closed to boating recreation. Increased traffic on the Quilici Ranch Road during construction would be dangerous for bikers on the road. A temporary closure of part of the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway between Floriston and Verdi during construction would prevent the public from inadvertently entering the project site during construction and protect the public from construction traffic. Coordination with the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway organization would occur as well as posted signs to inform the public of the temporary closure. Following construction of the proposed project, boaters would be able to safely navigate over the Steamboat Dam without needing to portage around. This would enhance recreation on the Truckee River.

To ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental assessment is being prepared to address potential effects of the proposed project.

**AUTHORITY:** The authority to grant permission for temporary or permanent use, occupation or alteration of any USACE federally authorized civil works project is contained in Section 14 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, as amended, codified at 33 USC 408 (“Section 408”). Section 408 authorizes the Secretary of the Army, on the recommendation of the Chief of Engineers, to grant permission for the alteration or occupation or use of a USACE project if the Secretary determines that the activity will not be injurious to the public interest and will not impair the usefulness of the project. The Secretary of Army’s authority under Section 408 has been delegated to the USACE, Chief of Engineers. The USACE Chief of Engineers has further delegated the authority to the USACE, Directorate of Civil Works and Division and District Engineers, depending upon the nature of the activity.

**LIMITS OF SECTION 408 AUTHORITY:** A requester has the responsibility to acquire all other permissions or authorizations required by federal, state, and local laws or regulations, including any required permits from the USACE Regulatory Program under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 USC 403), Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC Section 1344), and/or Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (33 USC 1413). In addition, an approval under Section 408 does not grant any property rights or exclusive privileges nor does it authorize any injury to the property or rights of others.

**EVALUATION FACTORS:** The decision whether to grant the requested permission for project alteration under Section 408 will be based on several factors. 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. Review of requests for alteration will be reviewed by a USACE technical review team considering the following factors:

- 1) Impair the Usefulness of the Project Determination. The review team will determine if the proposed alteration would limit the ability of the USACE project to function as authorized, or would compromise or change any authorized project conditions, purposes or outputs. In order for an alteration to be approved, the Requester must demonstrate that the alteration does not impair the usefulness of the federally authorized project.
  
- 2) Injurious to the Public Interest Determination. Proposed alterations will be reviewed to determine the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, on the public interest. Factors that may be relevant to the public interest evaluation depend upon the type of USACE project being altered and the nature of the proposed alteration and may include, but are not limited to, such things as conservation, economic development, historic properties, cultural resources, environmental impacts, water supply, water quality, flood hazards, floodplains, residual risk, induced damages, navigation, shore erosion or accretion, and recreation. This evaluation will consider information received from the interested parties, including tribes, agencies, and the public. The benefits that reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be compared against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. The decision whether to approve an alteration will be determined by the consideration of whether benefits are commensurate with risks and by the net impact of the alteration on the public interest using the public interest factors.

3) Environmental Compliance. A decision on a Section 408 request is a federal action, and therefore subject to the NEPA and other environmental compliance requirements. While USACE is responsible for ensuring environmental compliance, the requester is responsible for providing all information that the district identifies as necessary to satisfy all applicable federal laws, executive orders, regulations, policies, and procedures. NEPA and other analyses completed to comply with other environmental statutes (e.g., Endangered Species Act) should be commensurate with the scale and potential effects of the activity that would alter the USACE project. The district will work with the requester to determine the requirements, which will be scaled to the likely impacts of the proposed alteration and should convey the relevant considerations and impacts in a concise and effective manner.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:** The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public; federal, state, and local agencies and officials; tribes; and other interested parties regarding the Truckee River Fish Passage Project – Steamboat Dam Retrofit, a proposed alteration to an existing federally authorized project. Comments received within 30 days of publication of this notice will be used in the evaluation of potential impacts of the proposed action on important resources and in the evaluation of whether the proposed alteration would be injurious to the public interest and/or would impair the usefulness of the authorized project. Only the specific activities that have the potential to occupy, use or alter the Truckee River and Tributaries Project will be evaluated. Please limit comments to the area of the alteration and those adjacent areas that would be directly or indirectly affected by the alteration to the Truckee River and Tributaries Project.

**SUBMITTING COMMENTS:** Written comments, referencing Identification Number CTWCD-18-01 must be submitted to the office listed below on or before May 10, 2018.

Kaleigh Maze, Biologist  
US Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District  
1325 J Street, Room 1460  
Sacramento, California 95814-2922

Email: [Kaleigh.Maze@usace.army.mil](mailto:Kaleigh.Maze@usace.army.mil)

Attachments:

- 1) Vicinity map
- 2) Project design