

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Section 206

North Shore Riverfront Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

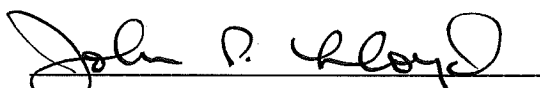
In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and implementing regulations, a draft Environmental Assessment has been integrated into the detailed project report for proposed aquatic and floodplain habitat restoration for the North Shore Riverfront Project along the Ohio River in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This project is located along the right descending bank of the upper Ohio River, just downstream of the confluence of the Allegheny and the Monongahela Rivers. The project area encompasses approximately 13 acres and 4,000 feet of riverfront along Pittsburgh's North Shore. The study analyzed four alternatives in detail to restore aquatic and floodplain habitat within the project area including a "No Action" alternative (Alternative 1), an alternative that focused on maximizing benefits for aquatic habitat (Alternative 2), an alternative that focused on maximizing benefits for floodplain habitat (Alternative 3), and an alternative that sought to balance both aquatic and floodplain habitat restoration (Alternative 4). Alternative 4 was selected as the preferred alternative. This alternative includes the restoration of aquatic habitat through the placement of parallel dikes to create slack-water habitat, placement of coarse substrate beneficial to aquatic species, restoration of a floodplain wetland, re-shaping existing river banks to provide additional and improved riparian habitat, removal of invasive species, planting of native species, and inclusion of recreational features consisting of soft trails and interpretive signs.

The EA and comments received from other agencies have been used to determine whether the proposed action requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). All environmental, social, and economic factors that are relevant to the proposal were considered in this assessment. These include, but are not limited to, water quality, air quality, noise, wetlands, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, and cultural resources. The primary benefit of the proposed project would be the restoration of aquatic and riparian habitat. Adverse effects would be temporary in nature and include temporary noise, dust, air quality, and water quality impacts. Best management practices would be employed to minimize these temporary effects. These effects were deemed to be non-significant.

While it is unlikely that the project would have any adverse effects on cultural resources, actions have been proposed to minimize these potential effects. It is possible that during construction activities, an inadvertent discovery of a cultural resource could occur. In order to address this uncertainty, the construction crew would receive training from a qualified archaeologist on how to identify potential cultural resources and a construction crew member would be responsible for monitoring during these ground disturbing activities. If a discovery is made, all construction would cease until a qualified archaeologist could report to the site to assess the discovery and ensure that the proper process is followed to address the discovery. If this process is followed, no significant impact is anticipated.

While the proposed actions are likely to have long-term benefits for federally-listed mussel species, it is possible that they could be disturbed during construction if they are within the project area. Due to the known and assumed habitat in the nearshore area, it is unlikely that they would exist within the project area. It is anticipated that the preferred alternative "may affect but is not likely to adversely affect" the northern riffleshell (endangered), clubshell (endangered), rayed bean (endangered), snuffbox (endangered), and rabbitsfoot (threatened); and have "no effect" on any other federally-listed species. Concurrence with this finding was received from the USFWS on November 29, 2016. To verify this conclusion, the Corps proposes to conduct a mussel survey early in the design and implementation phase of this project. Final survey design will be coordinated with the USFWS and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Based on the Environmental Assessment, the proposed Federal activity will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment and the proposed project will not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required and will not be prepared.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John P. Lloyd", written over a horizontal line.

John P. Lloyd

Colonel, Corps of Engineers

Pittsburgh District Commander