

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

UPPER TRINITY RIVER BASIN, TEXAS RIVERSIDE OXBOW, FORT WORTH

At the request of Tarrant Regional Water District, and under authority of an April 22, 1988 resolution by the United States Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works, the Fort Worth District Corps of Engineers conducted a study to identify water and water related land resource needs of the Riverside Oxbow study area of the Trinity River within the city limits of Fort Worth, Texas.

Investigations included examination of various ecosystem restoration measures within the floodplain of the West Fork of the Trinity River in eastern Fort Worth, Texas, along with restoration measures in adjacent riparian stringers and native prairie. Eleven alternative plans were formulated that led to the identification of the National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) Plan. In addition a "No Action" alternative and a Locally Preferred Plan were carried to the final array of alternatives.

The NER Plan consists of reestablishing low flows through the old West Fork of the Trinity River oxbow including replacing the existing Beach Street Bridge; creation of 69.6 acres of emergent wetlands, open water, and vegetative fringe habitat; and habitat improvement of 179.7 acres of existing forested tracts, including establishment of a 150 foot wide riparian buffer along the West Fork from Riverside Drive to East 1st Street. The buffer would consist of grass and forbs established on approximately 45.6 acres of land. Additional features of the NER include reforestation of approximately 66.9 acres of land using a variety of native hard- and soft-mast trees and shrubs and preservation and habitat improvements to approximately 206.9 acres of native prairie and scrub/shrub uplands. The NER Plan also includes compatible linear recreation development along a 9,000 foot-long by 10 foot-wide concrete trail, one vehicular bridge, 1,400 feet of crushed aggregate trail, 7,600 feet of wood mulch equestrian trail, and associated facilities (access points, parking lot, and restroom facilities).

Tarrant Regional Water District, as the local sponsor for this study, selected a Locally Preferred Plan (LPP) that differs from the NER Plan. The LPP consists of the NER features along with the additional features of reestablishing native species and protecting creek beds on 112 acres within the Tandy Hills Nature Preserve and adjacent private lands, located on the south side of IH-30, and eradicating invasive species on 80 of those 112 acres; 7,700 feet of crushed aggregate trail and associated facilities (access points and parking lot) in the Tandy Hill Nature Preserve; construction of three observation areas on lands associated with the NER plan; and construction of a new Gateway Park entrance road and bridge. These additional features would be funded by the non-federal sponsor.

The LPP is the Recommended Plan. It would provide for ecosystem restoration on 568.7 acres of floodplain lands, approximately 2 miles of Oxbow river channel, 69.6 acres of wetlands, and 112 acres of riparian stringer and adjacent upland native grasses. It would also include 25,700 feet of compatible mixed surface linear recreation trails.

The Recommended Plan has been reviewed in accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. All features proposed would comply with the terms and conditions of

Nationwide permit 27, Stream and Wetland Restoration Activities. The State of Texas has reviewed and provided water quality certification for Nationwide permit 27 and no further evaluation of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act is necessary. The proposed project was also reviewed and found to be in compliance with Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act.

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, was considered during the development of the Recommended Plan. There are no practical alternatives to achieve the project purposes of ecosystem restoration and recreation trail development without placing fill within the floodplain. Material removed from the project area requiring disposal as part of the recommended plan would be placed in approved landfills for the types of materials involved. The proposed fill actions would not result in adverse environmental impacts and, further, floodplain fill for recreational trail and ecosystem restoration would not directly or indirectly induce additional development in the floodplain and would, therefore, be in compliance with Executive Order 11988. Executive Order 11990 on the Protection of Wetlands was also considered during the development of the proposed project. The proposed project would neither adversely impact nor result in any loss of wetland areas so the project is in compliance with Executive Order 11990. The recommended plan was also found to be in compliance with the Executive Order on Environmental Justice.

Cultural resources compliance issues for the Riverside Oxbow study have been addressed through consultation with the Texas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. On site investigations resulted in the identification of historic archeological properties that could be impacted by excavation of the proposed return channel from the Oxbow Center Zone wetlands. As a result of that finding, the channel's alignment was modified to avoid those historic properties. The SHPO has tentatively concurred with the Corps' proposal to survey the modified alignment prior to construction so that final adjustments can be made as required to avoid any undiscovered historic properties.

Review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supports the Recommended Plan and has determined that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species.

An Environmental Assessment has been made of the Recommended Plan and its alternatives. Based upon the Environmental Assessment and results of coordination, I have concluded that the recommended plan will not have a significant adverse effect on the human environment nor is it environmentally controversial. In addition, construction of the project will not constitute a major Federal action of sufficient magnitude to warrant preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

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Robert P. Morris, Jr.
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers
Deputy District Engineer