DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
FORT WORTH DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 17300
FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76102-0300

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

April 14, 2003

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, FORT WORTH DISTRICT

Feasibility Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment, Riverside Oxbow, Fort Worth, Upper Trinity River Basin, Texas

All interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, has prepared an Interim Feasibility report with an integrated Environmental Assessment and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact addressing proposed ecosystem restoration and associated recreation activities within the Upper Trinity River Basin, City of Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas. A concurrent public review and State and Federal agencies review is being accomplished at this time. Upon completion of this review and after full consideration of all information received, the Chief of Engineers will complete his review of the report and submit a recommendation to the Secretary of the Army. **This review is the only scheduled opportunity for interested parties to review and comment on the report.** If the recommendation of the Chief of Engineers is significantly different from the recommendation coordinated with the public and the state and Federal agencies, interested parties will be afforded an opportunity to comment further prior to submission of the Chief's report to the Secretary.

Authority. This Notice of Availability is being issued to interested parties in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Public Law 91-190, as amended, and the implementing regulations in Engineering Regulation 200-2-2. The Feasibility Report presents the results of investigations conducted to identify water and water related land resource needs of the Riverside Oxbow floodplain within the city limits of Fort Worth, Texas. The report includes a comprehensive evaluation of identified ecosystem restoration and recreation needs.

These studies were conducted under the authority contained in the United States Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works Resolution, dated April 22, 1988, for the Upper Trinity River Basin. A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) was completed in June 2000 that addressed cumulative impacts of potential Corps of Engineers projects and projects of others in the Upper Trinity River Basin. This proposed Riverside Oxbow project, to the extent that it was defined at that time, was addressed in the PEIS. The Environmental Assessment integrated into the report is tiered to the PEIS, and the direct and cumulative impact assessments included in the PEIS are incorporated by reference. Site-specific resources and impacts are addressed in the Riverside Oxbow integrated report.

Purpose and Background. The purpose of the investigations was to examine the water and related land resources problems and needs along the West Fork of the Trinity River in the Riverside Oxbow region and identify opportunities to restore natural ecosystems to more recent historic conditions. The goal of this investigation was to determine whether there is a potential to restore ecosystem values and functions, and to identify feasible solutions. The proposed project was formulated to restore aquatic, wetland, riparian forest, and bottomland communities within the study area to benefit resident and migratory wildlife and aquatic species indigenous to the Trinity River riparian corridor. It is recognized that restoration of the fish and wildlife habitat which existed in the mid-1800's might not be possible; however, it is reasonable to expect to be able to restore and maintain the quantity and quality of floodplain and aquatic habitats that existed within more recent history. An additional goal of the study was to identify opportunities to incorporate recreation, water quality, erosion control, and allied purposes within the public interest to the maximum extent possible.

Proposed Action and Alternatives. The project area is located just east of downtown Fort Worth on the West Fork of the Trinity River. Generally, the project area includes adjacent lands between I-30 on the south, and the 100-year floodplain boundary to the north, downstream of Riverside Drive, and upstream of the First Street Bridge, a distance of two miles. The largest portion of the project lies downstream of Riverside Drive, extending to a point just downstream of Beach Street. This reach includes the old natural channel of the West Fork, which formed an isolated oxbow when the channel was realigned.

The National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) Plan consists of reestablishing 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; habitat improvement of 179.7 acres of existing forested areas, including establishment of a 150-foot wide riparian buffer along the West Fork from Riverside Drive to East 1st Street; establishment of a buffer of native grasses and forbs on approximately 45.6 acres of land; reforestation of roughly 66.9 acres using a variety of native hard and soft mast trees and shrubs; and preservation and habitat improvements to approximately 206.9 acres of native floodplain grassland. The NER Plan also includes compatible linear recreation along a 9,000-foot by 10-foot wide concrete trail including one vehicular bridge, 1,400 feet of crushed aggregate trail, 7,600 feet of wood mulch equestrian trail, and other associated facilities (access points, parking lot, and restroom facilities).

The Tarrant Regional Water District, as the local sponsor for this proposed project, selected a Locally Preferred Plan (LPP) that differs from the NER. The LPP would consist of the NER plan features along with the several additional features. The LPP includes eradication of 80 acres of invasive species and reestablishment of native species and creek bed protection on 112 acres within the Tandy Hills Nature Preserve, which is located on the south side of IH-30. The LPP also includes linear recreation in the form of 7,700 feet of crushed aggregate trail and associated facilities (access points and parking

lot) in the Tandy Hill Nature Preserve; three observation areas on the lands associated with the NER plan; and a new Gateway Park entrance road and bridge. These additional features of the LPP would be funded entirely by the non-Federal sponsor.

The Recommended Plan is the LPP(See Figure 1). In total, the recommended plan would restore ecosystem values on 512.2 acres of floodplain lands, approximately 2 miles of Oxbow river channel, 56.5 acres of wetlands, and 112 acres of uplands. It would also provide 25,700 feet of mixed surface linear recreation trails.

The proposed project has been reviewed in accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Since the purpose of the recommended plan is ecosystem restoration, the only constructed features proposed include two vehicle bridges (Beach Street and Gateway Park entrance) crossing the old West Fork of the Trinity River oxbow. As proposed, these crossings would span wetlands or waters of the United States and, therefore, would be in non-jurisdictional areas in compliance with Section 404. 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.

In addition to Section 404, Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, was considered during the formulation of the proposed project. 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, which requires disposal, would be placed in approved landfills for the types of materials involved. Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, was also considered during the development of the proposed project.

Cultural resources compliance issues for the proposed Riverside Oxbow project 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 Central 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 determined that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species.

The official closing date for the receipt of comments is 30 days from the date of this notice of availability. Copies of the Interim Feasibility Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment are available for review at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 17300, 819 Taylor Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300. Copies have also been distributed to the main library in Fort Worth, Texas, and to the Offices of the

Tarrant Regional Water District in Fort Worth, Texas. The report is also available for review on the Fort Worth District Internet Home Page at http://www.swf.usace.army.mil.

For further information, contact Ms. Marcia Hackett, Project Manager, at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, CESWF-PM-C, P.O. Box 17300, Fort Worth, Texas 76102–0300 or call her at (817) 886-1473.

Robert P. Morris, Jr.
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Acting District Engineer

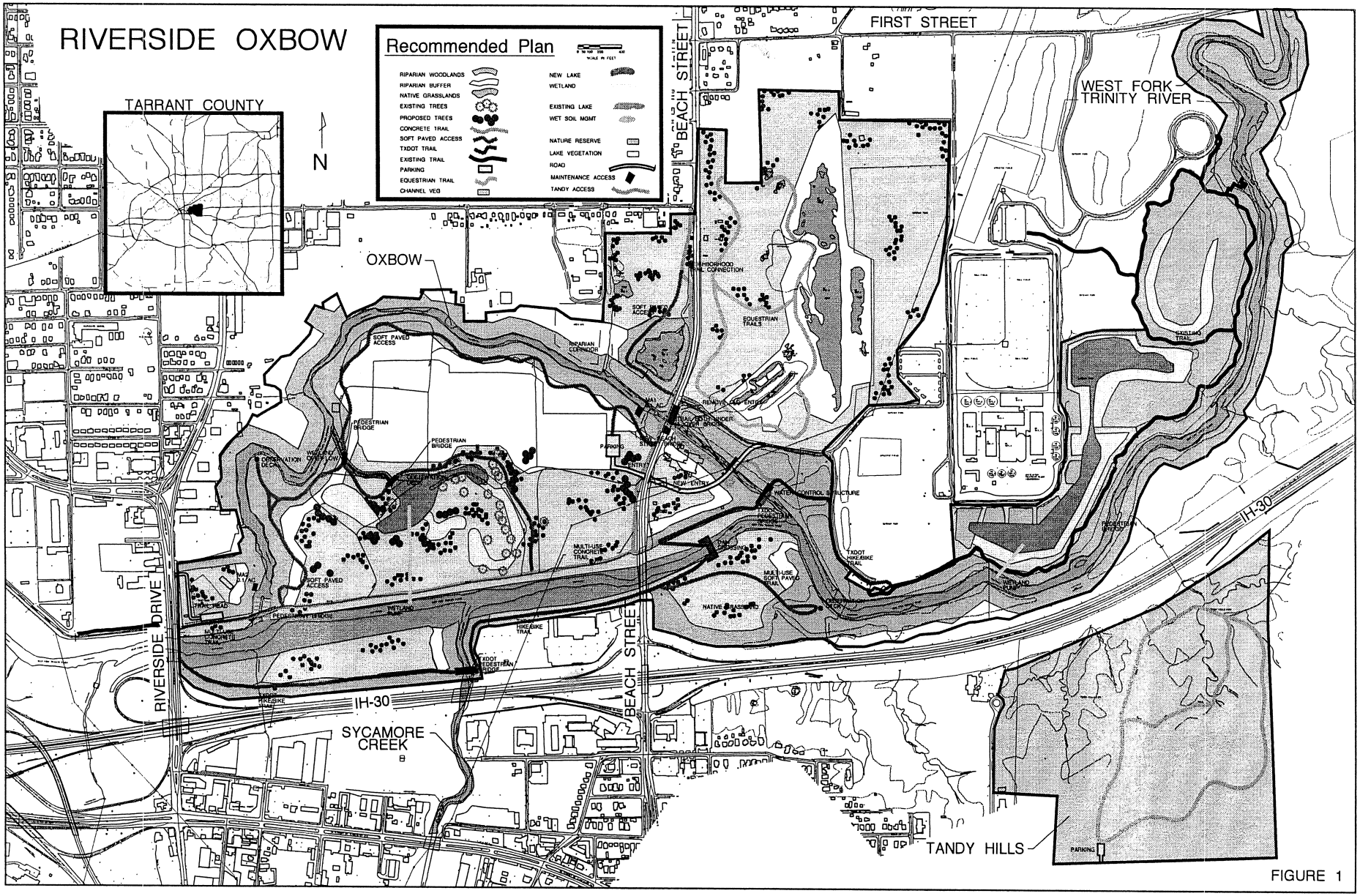
RIVERSIDE OXBOW
Recommended Plan
RIPARIAN WOODLANDS
RIPARIAN BUFFER
NATIVE GRASSLANDS
EXISTING TREES
PROPOSED TREES
CONCRETE TRAIL
SOFT PAVED ACCESS
TXDOT TRAIL
EXISTING TRAIL
PARKING
EQUESTRIAN TRAIL
CHANNEL VEG
NEW LAKE
WETLAND
EXISTING LAKE
WET SOIL MGMT
NATURE RESERVE
LAKE VEGETATION
ROAD
MAINTENANCE ACCESS
TANDY ACCESS
TARRANT COUNTY
N
FIRST STREET
BEACH STREET
WEST FORK
TRINITY RIVER
OXBOW
EQUESTRIAN TRAILS
PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
RIVERSIDE DRIVE
IH-30
IH-30
BEACH STREET
SYCAMORE CREEK
TANDY HILLS
PARKING

FIGURE 1