



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SAVANNAH DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
100 W. OGLETHORPE AVENUE
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31401-3604

December 8, 2017

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District,
and the
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of a Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment for the Noyes Cut Section 1135 Ecosystem Restoration Study.

Notice of the following is hereby given:

a. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344), notice is hereby given that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District proposes to restore a portion of the Satilla River estuary by closing man-made cuts that have degraded the ecosystem by altering the natural hydrology.

b. The Savannah District announces the availability to the public of a Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment concerning the proposed action. Copies of this document can be obtained from the following website: <http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/About/Divisions-and-Offices/Planning-Division/Plans-and-Reports/> or by emailing the following address: CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil.

c. Written statements regarding the Draft Integrated Report for the proposed action will be received at the Savannah District Office until

12 O'CLOCK NOON, JANUARY 8, 2017

from those interested in the activity and whose interests may be affected by the proposed action.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

The objectives of this Section 1135 environmental restoration project are:

- Restore historic depths and circulation patterns to Umbrella and Dover Creeks;
- Improve aquatic habitat for resident species (e.g., blue crabs, shrimp); and
- Increase connectivity and salinity gradients for migratory species (e.g., striped bass, American eels; and shad, river herring, etc.) in the upper reaches of the estuary.

To achieve the project objectives, this project would alter the hydrodynamic environment by closing Noyes Cut, Dynamite Cut, and Old River Run (ORR) (Figure 5 of Integrated Report). The closure structures would consist of a combination of rip rap, bedding stone, and sheet pile end walls. The closures would cross the existing waterway and tie into the marsh at each end to minimize environmental impacts within the marsh. Construction of the closures would use barges to avoid impacts to surrounding tidal salt marsh.

Noyes Cut is approximately 3,100 feet long and 500 feet wide. The Noyes Cut closure structure would be approximately 432 feet long, 72 feet wide, and 11 feet high.

ORR is approximately 3,000 feet long and 30 feet wide. The ORR closure structure would be approximately 112 feet long, 54 feet wide, and 8 feet high.

Dynamite Cut is approximately 350 feet long and 250 feet wide. The Dynamite Cut closure structure would be approximately 312 feet long, 66 feet wide, and 10 feet high.

The work would be performed at sites that consist of saltmarsh and tidal creeks. Such lands are owned by the State of Georgia. The State has participated in the design of the project and has indicated it will provide the real estate interests needed for the construction. All closure structures would include signage on both sides to warn boat traffic of the danger associated with the closures.

This proposed action includes de-authorization of Noyes Cut, as a former active portion of the Federally-authorized Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Project (AIWW) project. This de-authorization would occur after approval of this project. Even though Noyes Cut has been obsolete since 1939 (see Section 1.4 “History” of Integrated Report), it is still technically part of the Federal AIWW navigation project.

AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA:

Water Quality Certifications: The Georgia DNR-EPD intends to certify the proposed action at the end of 30 days in accordance with the provisions of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, which is required to conduct an activity in, on, or adjacent to the waters of the State of Georgia. Copies of the proposal and supporting documents will be available for review and copying at the office of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division, Water Protection Branch, 4220 International Parkway, Suite 101, Atlanta, Georgia 30354, during regular office hours. A copying machine is available for public use at a charge of 25 cents per page. Any person who desires to comment, object, or request a public hearing relative to State Water Quality Certification must do so within 30 days of the State's receipt of application in writing and state the reasons or basis of objections or request for a hearing. The proposal can also be viewed at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, Planning Division, 100 West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia.

Coastal Zone Consistency: The Georgia DNR-CRD intends to certify the proposed action at the end of 30 days in accordance with the provisions of the Georgia Coastal Zone Management program. Any person who desires to comment, object, or request a public hearing relative to the Georgia Coastal Zone Management program must do so within 30 days of the State's receipt of application in writing. Written comments may be mailed to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division, One Conservation Way, Suite 300, Brunswick, Georgia 31520.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:

Environmental Assessment: Savannah District has prepared a Draft Integrated Feasibility Report/Environmental Assessment and a finding has been made that an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required for this action. The Draft Report is being coordinated concurrently with this notice to Federal and State natural resource agencies for review and comment.

Threatened and Endangered Species: Savannah District conducted a survey of species protected by the Endangered Species Act and concluded that no protected species are likely to be adversely affected by the proposed action. No critical habitat has been designated in the project impact area.

Cultural Resources:

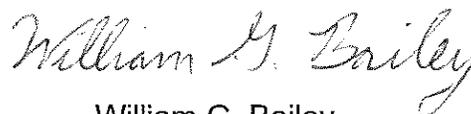
Savannah District conducted a cultural resources survey of the cuts and Old River Run and concluded no significant cultural resources are located within the areas where the closure structures will be placed. One anomaly was identified in Dover Creek, just southwest of the plug location identified for Dynamite Cut. The anomaly will not be impacted by placement of the closure plug or the created wetland habitat.

Wetlands: The proposed action involves closure of man-made cuts that would result in adverse impacts to minor amounts of tidal salt marsh from construction of the closure structures within the cuts. However, this adverse impact is expected to be more than offset by the restoration of wetlands (tidal salt marsh habitat) within the cuts. These man-made cuts are expected to at least partially fill in with wetland habitat from the natural processes of sedimentation and regeneration of wetland vegetation.

Public Interest Review: The decision whether to proceed with the project as proposed will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both the protection and use of important resources. The benefits which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal will be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof. Among these are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife, flood hazards, floodplains, land use, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership, environmental justice, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Consideration of Public Comments: The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Native American Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by USACE in its deliberations on this action. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts to endangered species, wetlands, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, socioeconomic effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of the Final Integrated Report pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public meeting and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Comment Period: Anyone wishing to comment to USACE on this proposed action should submit comments, in writing, no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, ATTN: Mr. David Walker (PM-P), 100 West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia 31401-3640 or by emailing the comments to the following address: CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil.



William G. Bailey
Chief, Planning Branch