



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Little Rock District

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

CORPS OF ENGINEERS – STATE OF ARKANSAS

Application Number: MVM 2016-00267-3

Date: October 3, 2016

Comments Due: October 18, 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: **Comments are invited on the work described below. Please see the Public Involvement section for details on submitting comments.**

Point of Contact. If additional information is desired, please contact the project manager, Johnny McLean, telephone number: (501) 324-5295, mailing address: Little Rock District Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Division, PO Box 867, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-0867, e-mail address: Johnny.L.McLean@usace.army.mil

Project Information. Pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S. Code 1344), notice is hereby given that the

**Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD)
PO Box 2261
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203**

has requested a modification and extension of their existing permit which authorizes the placement of dredged and fill material into waters of the United States associated with replacing the bridges and approaches over the White River and its adjacent floodplain at Clarendon. The modification would include the discharges into the White River associated with the existing (old) bridge demolition. The permit extension includes continued authorization for fill material previously placed in wetlands for construction of the temporary connector road, the placement of fill material for construction of a boat ramp at Old River Lake and parking areas, and the placement of fill material for temporary work roads and loading ramps for demolition. The project is located on the White River and its adjacent wetlands at river mile 99.1, in sections 21, 22, 28, and 29, T. 1 N., R. 3 W., Monroe County, Arkansas. The old bridge is located approximately 0.4 miles upstream from the new bridge. The new bridge was completed and opened to traffic on August 15, 2016.

The basic purpose of the project is to construct a boat ramp and parking areas for recreation, and construct temporary work roads and loading ramps for demolition and debris removal. The overall purpose is to complete the White River Bridge replacement job which includes demolition and removal of the old structures and embankment approaches. The project is not water dependent.

The bridge demolition over the navigable portion of the White River would also require authorization from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) in accordance with Section 9 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. The old bridge was constructed between 1930 and 1931 and consists of a 720-foot-long main steel structure with reinforced concrete flooring. The steel bridge is a double span warren truss with verticals based on four concrete piers. The bridge is considered structurally and functionally deficient and requires continual maintenance. The AHTD plans to remove the

bridge with explosives and excavators. The demolition sequence and methods of retrieval will be submitted by the contractor and approved by the AHTD. The AHTD contractor will likely drop the bridge into the river and then retrieve it. Approximately 5,800 cubic yards of concrete would be deposited into the river and approximately 4,000 cubic yards of that concrete would be recovered with excavators or clamshell buckets. All steel and detectable rebar would be recovered. Any asphalt would be removed prior to demolition and disposed at an approved upland site. The two bridge piers located in the White River channel would be removed to elevation 110.0 feet mean sea level. The AHTD would coordinate with the USCG and Memphis District Corps of Engineers to ensure that there would be only minor impacts to commercial navigation on the White River during demolition.

The White River Bridge and approaches are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, the AHTD and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) prepared a Section 4(f) Evaluation to evaluate removal of the bridge. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has been executed between the FHWA and Arkansas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and accepted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Execution of the MOA resulted in a determination of no adverse effect to the bridge by the Arkansas SHPO. The Section 4(f) Evaluation is included in the AHTD/FHWA Environmental Reassessment.

There are mussel beds located along the right and left descending banks of the White River at the old bridge location. This location is within the designated Critical Habitat Unit Rf8b for the Federally threatened Rabbitsfoot mussel (*Quadrula cylindrica cylindrica*). Also, the Federally endangered Pink Mucket (*Lampsilis abrupta*) and Fat Pocketbook (*Potamilus capax*) mussels are known to occur in the White River. Mussel surveys were conducted on July 12-13, 2016, and no threatened or endangered species were found. The FHWA will submit a Biological Assessment to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review. A special provision would be made part of the contract to minimize harm to migratory birds, such as swallow and phoebes, that periodically utilize the bridge for nesting.

The Section 404 permit authorized the discharge of approximately 504,775 cubic yards of dredged and fill material and the associated clearing and/or filling of approximately 75.8 acres of wetlands. Compensatory mitigation for the impacts to wetlands was accomplished with 251.5 acres at the Brushy Lake Mitigation Bank near Clarendon and Glaise Creek Mitigation Bank near Worden. The temporary connector road connects the old and new western approaches and required the discharge of approximately 25,875 cubic yards of fill material. It was built to maintain traffic during new bridge construction and will be removed during this project. Constructing the boat ramp and parking areas, and constructing the temporary access roads and loading ramps would discharge approximately 25,550 cubic yards of fill. The work roads would temporarily impact approximately 6.5 acres of herbaceous wetlands located within the maintained highway right-of-way. After demolition, the fills would be removed and these areas would be reshaped to their original contour and allowed to naturally revegetate. The wetland impacts were previously evaluated and impacts to water quality in the White River should occur only during demolition and be temporary. Therefore, no additional mitigation would be required.

The environmental assessment (EA) was approved for public dissemination on February 29,

2000, and a reevaluation of the EA was approved by the FHWA on August 16, 2005. The finding of no significant impact (FONSI) was approved on December 20, 2006. A Design Reassessment was approved May 26, 2010, for changes in the design of the new bridge. A reevaluation is currently being prepared by the FHWA to address any changes in the project that have occurred since the approval of the Design Reassessment. A copy of these documents can be viewed at the AHTD's central offices in Little Rock.

The location and general plan for the proposed work, and photographs of the old bridge are shown on the enclosed Sheets 1 through 4 of 4.

Water Quality Certification. By copy of this public notice, the applicant is requesting water quality certification from the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) in accordance with Section 401(a)(1) of the Clean Water Act. Upon completion of the comment period and a public hearing, if held, a determination relative to water quality certification would be made. Evidence of this water quality certification or waiver of the right to certify must be submitted prior to the issuance of a Corps of Engineers permit.

Cultural Resources. The AHTD staff archeologists have reviewed topographic maps, the National Register of Historic Places, and other data on reported sites in the area. The Federal Highway Administration has completed coordination with all associated Native American Nations and tribal governments. The District Engineer invites responses to this public notice from Federal, State, and local agencies; historical and archeological societies; and other parties likely to have knowledge of or concerns with historic properties in the area.

Endangered Species. The project lies within the current known range of the Federally threatened Rabbitsfoot mussel and the Federally endangered Pink Mucket and Fat Pocketbook mussels. Our preliminary determination is that the proposed activity will not affect listed Threatened or Endangered Species or their critical habitat. A copy of this notice is being furnished to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and appropriate state agencies and constitutes a request to those agencies for information on whether any other listed or proposed-to-be-listed endangered or threatened species may be present in the area which would be affected by the proposed activity.

Floodplain. We are providing copies of this notice to appropriate floodplain officials in accordance with 44 CFR Part 60 (Floodplain Management Regulations Criteria for Land Management and Use) and Executive Order 11988 on Floodplain Management.

Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines. The evaluation of activities to be authorized under this permit which involves the discharge of dredged or fill material would include application of guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, under authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act. These guidelines are contained in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 230.

Public Involvement. Any interested party is invited to submit to the above-listed POC written comments or objections relative to the proposed work on or before **October 18, 2016**. Substantive comments, both favorable and unfavorable, would be accepted and made a part of the record and would receive full consideration in determining whether this work would be in the

public interest. The decision whether to issue a permit would be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision would 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. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal would be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received would be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Any person may request in writing within the comment period specified in this notice that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing. The District Engineer would determine if the issues raised are substantial and whether a hearing is needed for making a decision.

NOTE: The mailing list for this Public Notice is arranged by state and county(s) where the project is located, and also includes any addressees who have asked to receive copies of all public notices. Please discard notices that are not of interest to you. If you have no need for any of these notices, please advise us so that your name can be removed from the mailing list.

Enclosures

Approximate Coordinates of Project Center

UTM Zone: **15** Northing: **3839824** Easting: **654217**