

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NORTHWESTERN DIVISION
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RECORD OF DECISION

Lower Columbia River (LCR) Channel Maintenance Plan (CMP) Final Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
LCR Federal Navigation Channel (FNC) portion of the Columbia and Lower Willamette (C&LW)
Project below Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Portland District prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) dated May 1, 2026, for the Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) to support the continued operations and maintenance (O&M) of the Lower Columbia River (LCR) Federal Navigation Channel (FNC) for a minimum of 20 years. The NEPA process for this EIS began in 2017, prior to the 2025 rescissions of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) NEPA regulations previously found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500 (90 Federal Register [FR] 10610; February 25, 2025) or the rescission of most subsections of the Corps' agency-specific NEPA-implementing regulations previously found at 33 CFR Part 320. New Departmental NEPA-implementing procedures were contemporaneously issued in July of 2025, "Department of Defense National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures (DoD NEPA Procedures)," with specification that the Corps will follow NEPA implementation guidance issued by the Department of Defense and any applicable guidance issued by the U.S. Army in implementing NEPA (90 FR 27857). However, these Departmental procedures specified that actions ongoing as of the effective date of the rule (July 3, 2025) will continue to use the rule in place at the time the action was started (90 FR 29463). Therefore, in order to be consistent with this guidance and avoid delay, the Corps applied CEQ's prior NEPA regulations, the Corps' prior agency-specific NEPA regulations (which can be found at 53 FR 3120–3137 (February 3, 1988), and the relevant guidance accompanying those regulations in completing this EIS.

Seven cooperating agencies, sponsor ports, tribes, and other interested parties provided information and review throughout the EIS process. The Corps and cooperators' expertise, developed over decades of experience operating the projects, allowed for careful, comprehensive consideration of current, high-quality technical and scientific information, as well as expert analysis for a thorough evaluation of the actions. Based on these reports, the reviews by other Federal, State, and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, I find the Recommended Plan to be technically feasible, environmentally justified, cost effective, in accordance with environmental statutes, and the public interest.

The Final EIS, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would continue O&M in the study area. For this project, the least-cost, most-feasible plan was identified as the Recommended Plan, Maximize Placement. A software model called the Dredged Material Management Decisions Model (D2M2), developed by the Corps Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC), was used to refine the Recommended Plan.

The Recommended Plan (Alternative 1 Refined) is to continue maintaining the Columbia River navigation channel to its authorized dimensions, 43 feet deep and 600 feet wide, for a

minimum of 20 years. The fully funded cost estimate for the Recommended Plan is \$562,981,000. The Recommended Plan includes the following new features: 17 in-water shallow placement sites; 7 confined aquatic placement sites with structures; 15 upland placement sites; 15 in-water transfer sites; and 52 shoreline sites (2 of which also include repair of existing pile dikes for stabilization). All these placement sites provide ecological and/or economic benefits.

Additionally, the Recommended Plan includes the following existing sites with remaining capacity and forecasted repairs, described in the No Action Alternative (NAA)/Base Condition:

- 19 upland placement sites
- 8 in-water transfer sites
- 5 shoreline sites with 1 site requiring repair of existing pile dikes
- Repair of 96 pile dike structures, and 16 major maintenance repairs of pile dike structures
- 20 sites (upland and shoreline placement sites) providing ecological and/or economic benefits
- In-water deep placement in the Columbia River
- Continued use of the Deep Water Site Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (DWS ODMDS)

Implementation of environmental compensatory mitigation and associated monitoring will ensure unavoidable adverse impacts are offset. Monitoring will continue until the mitigation is determined to be successful based on the identified criteria within the Implementation Plan included in Appendix J.7. Monitoring is expected to last for the duration of the period of implementation, or until necessary to achieve ecological success.

Initial management measures were identified for further analysis; those measures included several strategies which the Corps narrowed down further to reduce redundancy. From there, 30 management measures were identified which were screened into a final array of 12 management measures which were then evaluated against the objectives. These 12 management measures were grouped into two action alternatives.

In addition to a “no action” plan, two action alternatives were evaluated. The alternatives included Alternative 1 - Maximize Placement and Alternative 2 - Minimize Dredging. See chapters 2, 3 and 5 of the DMMP-EIS main report for alternative formulation and selection discussions. Alternative 1 - Refined Maximize Placement was identified as the environmentally preferable alternative and is the Recommended Plan.

The No Action Alternative relies on the use of in-water placement sites to manage dredged material, which will overload the system over time. In contrast, in-water deep placement attempts to emulate the process of sediment transport and morphology evolution that naturally occurs within and adjacent to the river’s thalweg zone (natural river deep-water flow area). In-water deep placement enables sediments to be redistributed back into the river’s morphology, where it sustains the river’s sediment budget, maintains habitats that rely on sediment, and stabilizes the river. Many of the in-water sites will reach capacity by Year 8 or sooner as additional dredged material is placed within these areas, and a higher proportion of the placed sediment will be transported directly back into the LCR FNC. As the LCR FNC receives additional shoaling sediment from overloaded in-water deep placement sites, the FNC will require increased annual O&M dredging and additional dredged material placement sites. Placement options are limited for the Base Condition. The Base Condition’s overloaded in-water placement site scenario will significantly increase the Corps’ efforts to maintain the LCR FNC, compromise the FNC’s reliability, and reduce habitat resilience within the LCR. The Base

Condition does not provide a reliable deep-draft FNC within the LCR, nor does it satisfy long-term needs of a sustainable river system.

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of Recommend Plan

	Significant adverse effect	Less than significant effects due to mitigation	Insignificant effects	Resource unaffected by action
Visual Quality and Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air quality and Clean Air Act Related to Pollutants of Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ecological Systems and Special Aquatic Sites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fish and wildlife	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened/Endangered species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
River Hydraulics, Sedimentation, and Morphology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Infrastructure and Navigation Projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socioeconomics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tribal resources, Tribal rights, and Tribal lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Recommended Plan would result in additional effects from the construction and use of new placement sites to wildlife and wildlife habitat, including ESA-listed species and their designated critical habitat compared to the NAA. The Recommended Plan would also result in additional effects from construction and placement to Aquatic resources/wetlands when compared to the NAA.

All practicable means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in the EIS will be implemented to avoid and minimize impacts.

Air and Water Quality Protection: All dredging equipment will comply with air emissions standards. Dredging equipment (drag heads/cutterheads) will be operated to minimize water quality impacts. Sediment sampling/testing will follow Sediment Evaluation Framework (SEF) protocols.

Dredged Material Management: Dredged material will be evenly spread to prevent mounding and minimize impacts to aquatic life. Berms will be constructed as needed to prevent material from entering sensitive aquatic areas. Erosion control measures will be used during upland

placement. New upland sites with fine sediment will be stabilized prior to use. Shoreline placement sites will be graded (10–15% slope, no swales) to prevent stranding of juvenile salmonids. Material placement will follow site management and monitoring plans, with annual use plans for designated disposal sites.

Site and Equipment Management: Land-based equipment entering waterbodies will be cleaned and use environmentally safe fluids. Vegetation along waterbodies will be preserved, with minimal removal for access. Construction access and barge ramps will be minimized in size. All construction debris and equipment will be removed after project completion, and no abandonment will occur on site.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Protection: Site preparation will avoid songbird nesting and Columbian white-tailed deer breeding seasons (March–August). Consistent with the requirements of formal consultation under the ESA, all in-water work will be limited to designated in-water work windows. Environmental screenings will be conducted for hazardous, toxic, and radioactive waste (HTRW); appropriate agencies will be notified if contamination is found. In-water releases of regulated materials will be reported and responded to per federal/state requirements.

Pile Driving and Noise Mitigation: Pile driving will occur within ESA-approved in-water work windows. Bubble curtains, soft-start procedures, and noise dampeners will be used during pile driving. Visual monitoring for marine mammals will be conducted by qualified observers per MMPA requirements.

Avian Dissuasion and Monitoring: Multiple avian dissuasion methods (chemical, visual, auditory, biological, mechanical, passive, and physical barriers) will be used in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Pre-implementation surveys will be conducted to minimize impacts to streaked horned larks.

Aquatic Resources: The Recommended Plan will result in unavoidable adverse impacts to aquatic resources which will require mitigation. The Corps anticipates the Recommended Plan will result in permanent loss of 17.9 acres of wetlands at upland placement sites. This loss will be offset by acquiring appropriate in-kind credits from a Corps-approved mitigation bank. The Recommended Plan will also result in impacts on vegetated shallows. Losses of vegetated shallows (SAV, intertidal, and low marsh habitat zones) are mainly due to the decrease in shallower water areas and increases in higher elevation areas through dredged material placement. These losses will be offset by out-of-kind mitigation due to the expansive scope and scale of the Recommended Plan. Detailed analysis can be found in Appendix J2 and Appendix J.7.

Refuges and ESA-Listed Species: Unavoidable adverse impacts to refuges will be mitigated in a manner that establishes habitat for Columbia White-tailed Deer and other ESA-listed species in coordination with USFWS. See DMMP- EIS chapters 6 and 7 for further information and the Implementation Plan in appendix J.7. for a description of monitoring and adaptive management measures. All applicable environmental laws have been considered. The Corps continues to coordinate with USFWS as to the compatibility of establishing disposal sites within the Lewis and Clark and Julia Butler Hanson National Wildlife Refuges. The Corps anticipates receiving a positive compatibility determination for the Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge in 2027. Coordination regarding the Julia Butler Hanson National Wildlife Refuge remains ongoing, and any future disposal site authorization would be contingent on completion of USFWS compatibility review and positive determination. For areas within Refuges where a compatibility determination is needed, these areas will not be utilized until such time as USFWS determines the placement of dredged material is compatible and provides the Corps with site access.

Cultural Resources Mitigation: The Recommended Plan will result in unavoidable adverse impacts to cultural resources. Unavoidable adverse effects to historic properties, or cultural resources eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, will require mitigation. These unavoidable adverse effects will be mitigated following the LCR Navigation Program Programmatic Agreement (PA) that was executed May 1, 2024, under NHPA Section 106. For additional details, the executed PA can be found in the EIS Appendix K.

Public review of the draft DMMP-EIS was completed on 6 November 2024. All substantive comments submitted during the public comment period were responded to in the Final EIS.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued biological opinions dated August 2nd, 2024 and January 12th, 2026, respectively, which determined that the recommended plan will not jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitat within the action area.

The reasonable and prudent measures, including their associated terms and conditions and certain conservation measures identified during these consultations, will be implemented to minimize the impact of incidental take on the species and avoid jeopardy.

Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, the Corps submitted a request for a Letter of Authorization from the NMFS for incidental take of marine mammals likely to occur due to the Proposed Action, specifically pile driving needed during the construction of confined aquatic placement sites. NMFS issued regulations governing the authorization of marine mammal take during implantation for a period of 5 years from November 1, 2027, through February 29, 2032 (90 FR 20110, May 12, 2025). LOAs have a maximum duration of five years, thus, a new LOA will be sought for projected pile driving in the next 5-year increment of the plan. All marine mammal monitoring and reporting requirements included in the final rule shall be implemented.

Pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Corps determined that historic properties may be adversely affected by the recommended plan. The Corps and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation entered into a PA. If following identification of historic properties as defined in the PA, there are determined to be adverse effects the Corps will resolve them by applying mitigation measures as described in Stipulation V of the PA. All terms and conditions resulting from the PA shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to historic properties.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, all discharges of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan have been found to be compliant with the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines evaluation is found in Appendix J.2 of the EIS.

A water quality certification pursuant to section 401 of the Clean Water Act was obtained from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) and Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE), dated November 24, 2025, and June 5, 2025, respectively. All applicable and feasible conditions of the water quality certification will be implemented to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

A determination of consistency with the Washington Coastal Zone Management program (WCMP) and Oregon Coastal Zone Management program (OCMP) pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 was prepared and a concurrence was obtained from WDOE, and a conditional concurrence was obtained from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (ODLCD). Because the Corps is unable to accept all conditions in ODLCD's concurrence, the Corps is treating it as an objection but will implement all applicable and feasible conditions.

FINDING

Technical, environmental, economic, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives. Based on the review of these evaluations, I find that benefits of the recommended plan outweigh the costs and any adverse effects. This Record of Decision completes the National Environmental Policy Act process.

Date

William C. Hannan, Jr.
Brigadier General, U.S. Army Commanding