



Fort Worth Central City Preliminary Design

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report

Draft Supplement No. 1 to the Final Environmental Impact Statement

Appendix G

January 2008

Images courtesy of CDM, Gideon Toal, and Bing Thom Architects





United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services
WinSystems Center Building
711 Stadium Drive, Suite 252
Arlington, Texas 76011

November 20, 2007

Colonel Christopher W. Martin
District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
(Attn: Billy Colbert, CESWF-EV-EE)
P.O. Box 17300
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300

Re: Draft Supplemental Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report for the Fort Worth Central City Project, Tarrant County, Texas.

Dear Colonel Martin:

Enclosed for your information and review is the Secretary of the Interior's Draft Supplemental report on the Central City Interim Feasibility Study pursuant to the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.). The purpose of this report is to identify and evaluate anticipated impacts of implementing the proposed changes to the authorized Central City Project and merging it with the Riverside Oxbow Project on fish and wildlife resources within the Trinity River floodplain in Tarrant County, Texas and to recommend conservation and mitigation measures for natural resource protection. Our final supplemental FWCA report will be coordinated with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and submitted to accompany your final Detailed Project Report. Please provide any review comments on our draft report at your earliest convenience.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with you and your staff on this project and to provide this report to you. You may contact Carol S. Hale of my staff at the above address or telephone number (817) 277-1100 if you have any questions or require additional technical assistance.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Cloud, Jr.
Field Supervisor

Enclosure

November 20, 2007

Colonel Christopher W. Martin
District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
(Attn: Billy Colbert, CESWF-EV-EE)
P.O. Box 17300
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300

Re: Draft Supplemental Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report for the Fort Worth Central City Project, Tarrant County, Texas.

Dear Colonel Martin:

This letter constitutes the Secretary of the Interior's draft supplemental Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) report for the Central City project located in the City of Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas. This report is submitted under the authority of, and in accordance with, Section 2(b) of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et. seq.). Our report is being coordinated with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

The purpose of this report is to identify and evaluate anticipated impacts of implementing the proposed changes to the authorized Central City Project and merging it with the Riverside Oxbow Project on fish and wildlife resources within the Trinity River floodplain in Tarrant County, Texas and to recommend conservation and mitigation measures for natural resource protection.

Authority for the Corps' investigations on the Upper Trinity River Basin was given by the U.S. Senate Committee on Environmental Public Works Resolution dated April 22, 1988. The Corps initiated this study at the request of Tarrant Regional Water District (TRWD) to examine opportunities to reduce flood damage, restore ecosystems, and provide additional and improved recreational opportunities along the West and Clear Forks of the Trinity River and its tributaries within the City of Fort Worth.

Since 2001, at the request of TRWD, and under the June 2000 Upper Trinity River Basin Study authority, the Corps has been evaluating various alternatives for flood damage reduction, mitigation and reestablishment of fish and wildlife habitats, recreational opportunities, and other allied projects along the West and Clear Forks of the Upper Trinity River and its tributaries in Tarrant County.

The Riverside Oxbow Ecosystem Restoration and the Central City Multi-Purpose projects were the first two studies conducted as part of the comprehensive Clear Fork and West Fork of the Trinity River Interim Feasibility Study. The Corps' Riverside Oxbow Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment were completed in April 2003 and some aspects of the plan have already been implemented. In December 2004, the U.S. Congress authorized the Corps to undertake the Central City project as generally described in the April 2003 Trinity River Vision Master Plan, a cooperative initiative between TRWD, Streams and Valleys (a local non-profit parks organization), and the City of Fort Worth. The Upper Trinity River Central City plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) were completed in January 2006.

The Central City project plan, as described in the January 2006 EIS, includes a flood bypass channel and flood gates to divert flood flow around a segment of the existing Trinity River adjacent to downtown Fort Worth, a dam located downstream of Samuels Avenue to create a small lake extending up the river to approximately Rockwood Park, ecological restoration areas, and 5,250 acre-feet of valley storage mitigation sites. Much of the proposed valley storage was to be located in the Riverbend Park area to compensate for the loss of valley storage associated with the construction of the proposed dam and bypass channel on the Trinity River. Habitat improvement, restoration, and enhancement were also planned for the Riverbend Park area to compensate for project impacts.

The April 2003 Riverside Oxbow Interim Feasibility Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment contains plans for the Riverside Oxbow ecosystem restoration project located just east of the downtown area on the West Fork of the Trinity River downstream of Riverside Drive. It consists of habitat restoration on 512.2 acres of floodplain lands, approximately 2 miles of oxbow river channel, 56.5 acres of wetlands, 112 acres of riparian habitat and upland native grassland, and 25,700 feet of compatible mixed surface linear recreational trails.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) assisted the Corps in assessing both of these projects which involved attending team meetings, conducting site visits, completing baseline habitat assessments, and evaluating alternative plans. The Service submitted its

final FWCA reports to the Corps for the Riverside Oxbow project on May 16, 2003 and the Central City project on October 5, 2005. These reports identified the fish and wildlife resources within the project areas, potential project impacts, and recommended ecosystem mitigation and restoration measures.

On June 22, 2006, the City requested that the Corps conduct an evaluation and analysis to consider the potential benefits of merging the Central City and the Riverside Oxbow project areas. The Corps requested that the Service provide additional existing conditions, impact assessments, mitigation requirements, and ecosystem restoration recommendations for the sponsor's proposed valley storage mitigation sites associated with the Central City and the Riverside Oxbow combined project.

Significant changes in land use and development activities within the Riverside Oxbow and the Central City project areas have occurred since the interim feasibility reports and National Environmental Policy Act documents were completed, such as the recent gas well drilling near the Riverside Oxbow.

The current study proposal contains two alternatives, the "No Action" alternative which would be the separate implementation of both the Central City project and the Riverside Oxbow Ecosystem Restoration project as currently approved, and the Modified Central City alternative which combines both projects and provides greater opportunities for valley storage and wildlife habitat restoration.

Our assessment and recommendations for this project are based on data collected during field investigations by the Service, TPWD, and Corps staff; information received from the Corps and TRWD; and review comments provided by TPWD. The Service's FWCA reports for the Central City and the Riverside Oxbow Ecosystem Restoration projects contain our assessment of the existing environmental conditions of the project area and habitat restoration recommendations for the "No Action" alternative. The information contained in these reports and most of our recommendations have been incorporated into the Modified Central City alternative.

Aquatic Habitat

The fisheries survey conducted by the Service in 2005 on Marine Creek demonstrated that the shallow riffle-pool sequences currently support an exceptional and high valued fish community. The habitat in the lower reach of nearby Lebow Creek also supports an exceptional fish assemblage. The Service has designated the aquatic habitats within Marine and Lebow Creeks as Resource Category 3. Category 3 habitat is of high to medium value for the evaluation species and is relatively abundant on a national basis. The mitigation goal for this category is no net loss of habitat value while minimizing loss of in-kind values. Impacts to these aquatic resources should be avoided, minimized, and/or compensated.

The Service expressed concerns in our October 5, 2005 Central City FWCA report that the aquatic habitat in these reaches would be totally lost due to inundation caused by the proposed Samuels Avenue Dam included in the proposed Community Based Alternative in the 2006 Central City Multi-Purpose project. The Modified Central City Alternative proposes to relocate the Samuels Avenue Dam to approximately 1,750 feet downstream of Northside Drive on the main stem of the Trinity River, immediately upstream from the confluence of Marine Creek. This new location would eliminate impacts to Lebow Creek. During normal dry weather the dam would maintain the normal water pool level elevation of 524.3 NGVD. The proposed channel and lock structure that would connect the Trinity River with Marine Creek and the fixed low water dam proposed on Marine Creek, approximately 300 feet upstream of the confluence with the main stem of the river, would maintain a pool level of 516.5 NGVD within the creek. This pool elevation is much lower than the original project pool level. This lower pool level would reduce backwater impacts to Marine Creek, but would still result in the inundation of lotic fishery habitat. Therefore, mitigation of this habitat would be required.

The Service supports the proposed Modified Central City alternative aquatics mitigation plan. This plan proposes developing additional stream mitigation features in Sycamore Creek and Ham Branch. Aquatic mitigation would entail constructing a series of riffle-pool sequences with a stable streambed supported by stable banks and a riparian corridor on both streams. The streams should have a sufficient longitudinal profile (slope) to maintain adequate flow regimes. Substrate composition would be similar to the habitat in Marine Creek. We believe these mitigation measures would fully compensate for the

adverse impacts to the aquatic habitat in Marine Creek resulting from the construction of the Samuels Avenue Dam and the low water structure.

We also support restoring the old remnant of Sycamore Creek between the Riverside Oxbow and the Trinity River. Providing a reliable water source and restoring the aquatic function of this segment of Sycamore Creek would benefit aquatic species and contribute to the mitigation requirement for the impacts associated with inundating Marine Creek. Habitat restoration benefits would not be fully realized for several years, but the newly planted aquatic vegetation proposed in the mitigation plan would probably be well established within one year. Habitat values for ducks, wading birds, fish, and terrestrial wildlife would remain relatively low until habitat conditions improve through time. By the end of the period of analysis, habitat conditions should improve to near optimum for most of the evaluation species.

The proposed valley storage site located in Harmon Field Park contains the proposed Ham Branch restoration project area. Ham Branch is also being proposed for aquatic habitat restoration to mitigate the impacts to the aquatic environments associated with inundation of Marine Creek due to the proposed Samuels Avenue Dam. The Service also supports the proposed aquatic and riparian habitat restoration of Ham Branch.

Valley Storage Sites

The proposed contingency valley storage Site 1 is located within Riverbend Park. Our October 5, 2005 report contained information regarding the diversity of high quality

habitat located within this area. We recommend that this area not be considered for excavation for valley storage, but as possible habitat mitigation if additional habitat mitigation is necessary.

Proposed valley storage Sites 14a and 14b appear to be located within the riparian corridor of the Riverside Oxbow. This site was designated as an environmental sensitive area by the Corps and Service, because it contains riparian bottomland hardwood habitat. This cover type is predominately composed of mature pecan, oaks, and elms. It provides food, cover, nesting habitat, and living space for forest dependant wildlife species. Riparian forest habitats are essential in maintaining biodiversity and providing important wildlife travel corridors. We recommend that the boundaries of proposed valley storage sites 14a and 14b be relocated outside the designated “environmental sensitive area.”

Summary

After reviewing all the information provided by your environmental staff regarding the proposed changes to the two approved projects in order to combine them, we have determined that the Corps’ recommended plan, including the recommendations discussed above, will provide a sufficient amount of habitat restoration and preservation to mitigate the adverse impacts resulting from the Modified Central City project alternative. The mitigation plan will provide for habitat diversity, quality, and quantity, benefiting a variety of resident and migratory wildlife species. The proposed alternative plan would also not adversely affect threatened and endangered species. Therefore, we support implementation of the proposed Modified Central City Alternative.

The Service appreciates the opportunity to participate in the planning of this project. Please contact Carol Hale at (817) 277-1100 if you have any questions or require additional assistance.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Cloud, Jr.
Field Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Jennifer Key, TPWD, Austin, Texas
Executive Director, TPWD, Austin, Texas

DRAFT