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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Little Rock District) Public Notices Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department Permit Application Related to Searcy, Arkansas Bypass Construction

Arkansas Environmental, Energy, and Water Law Blog

05/12/2016

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (Little Rock District) ("Corps") issued a May 9th Public Notice stating that the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department ("AHTD") requested authorization for the placement of dredged and fill material in waters of the United States associated with constructing what is characterized as the final segment of the Searcy Bypass.

The proposed project is located on the northwest side of Searcy, Arkansas and would connect State Highway 16 and State Highway 36.

The segment would cross seven streams and one wetland area.

The basic purpose of the project is stated to be the construction of a connector between Highway 16 and Highway 36. The overall purpose of the project is stated to be the relief of congestion in Searcy by allowing traffic to avoid Race Street and Beebe Capps Expressway (allowing drivers traveling from the north and drivers traveling from U.S. Highway 67/167 to bypass traffic in downtown Searcy).

The project is deemed non-water dependent.

The seven streams that would be intersected include:

... Deener Creek and two of its unnamed tributaries, and Rocky Branch and three of its unnamed tributaries. Deener Creek is intermittent and its two unnamed tributaries are ephemeral. Rocky Branch is perennial. One of Rocky Branch's unnamed tributaries is perennial (spring-fed), one is intermittent, and is ephemeral. Five of the seven streams are moderately functional and two of the seven streams are functionally impaired. The substrate of the streams is primarily soft sediment with some rock. Approximately 1,105 linear feet of stream and 0.3 acres of forested wetlands would be permanently impacted. Approximately 1,333 cubic yards of fill would be discharged into the wetlands and approximately 3,600 cubic yards of fill would be discharged into the streams to realign the streams and construct pipe or box culverts.

The project is located in the Arkansas River Ecoregion and in the Little Red River 8-digit hydrologic unit code.

The Public Notice states that the Federal Highway Administration completed a National Environmental Policy Act environmental assessment in 2012 evaluating three new location alternatives. The reason for the choice of this alternative was discussed and a National Environmental Policy Act finding of no significant impact was completed on December 1, 2014. Also discussed are the absence of environmental justice issues and historic or archeological sites. The project would relocate 7 residences.

AHTD is proposing to mitigate for unavoidable impacts to 1,105 linear feet of stream at the Hartsugg Creek Mitigation Bank. Stream banks were stated to have been calculated utilizing the Little Rock District Stream Method.

AHTD proposes to mitigate for unavoidable impacts to 0.3 acres of wetlands at AHTD's Glaise Creek Mitigation Bank near Worden, Arkansas. These wetland credit requirements were calculated utilizing the 2002 Charleston Method.

[Click here to download a copy of the Public Notice.](#)