



Commander (dpw)
Thirteenth Coast Guard District
915 2nd Avenue
Seattle, WA 98174-1067

February 6, 2019

PUBLIC NOTICE 01-19

Subject: NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF RAILROAD BRIDGES ACROSS SAND CREEK AND LAKE PEND OREILLE AT SANDPOINT, BONNER COUNTY, IDAHO

All interested parties are notified that the U. S. Coast Guard, as the lead federal agency, announces the availability of a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for the proposed construction of railroad bridges across Lake Pend Oreille and Sand Creek at Sandpoint, Bonner County, Idaho. The proposed bridges will be built parallel to existing railroad bridges crossing the same waterbodies. As structures built over navigable waterways of the United States, the proposed bridges will require a Coast Guard Bridge Permit concurrent with completion of an environmental review. The Coast Guard is making the draft EA available for public review and comment. In order to ensure the widest dissemination possible, the Coast Guard distributed a separate document announcing the availability of this public notice to a mailing list that includes seasonal residents and visitors to the Lake Pend Oreille region.

The applicant and owner of the existing railroad bridges, the BNSF Railway Company, asserts the present single-track configuration has become a constraint to efficient rail movement, resulting in congestion on the BNSF main line, rail yards and on sidings as trains await clearance to cross the existing single track bridges. Moreover, trains awaiting an opportunity to cross the bridge often block vehicular traffic at both public and private at-grade rail crossings. According to BNSF, the proposed new bridges will serve to relieve worsening rail congestion and allow for the more efficient movement of train traffic throughout the Lake Pend Oreille region.

The Coast Guard is the lead federal agency for this project and, as such, responsible for the review of its potential effects on the human environment, including historic properties and tribal impacts, pursuant to NEPA and NHPA. The Coast Guard, therefore, is required by law to ensure potential environmental effects are carefully evaluated in each bridge permitting decision. As part of this evaluation process, the Coast Guard solicits

comments from State and Federal agencies with expertise in, and authority over, particular resources that may be impacted by a project. Additionally, the Coast Guard seeks input from any tribes that may be affected or otherwise have expertise or equities in the project. Agencies that have already participated in the environmental review of this project include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ). Comments provided by those agencies as well as the Kootenai Tribe were incorporated in the draft EA. The draft EA describes the proposed project, evaluates reasonable and feasible alternatives, and defines the natural, cultural and socioeconomic resources located in the project area. Based on the draft EA, the Coast Guard has tentatively determined the proposed project will pose no significant impacts on the human and natural environment. The draft EA has been prepared in accordance with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR §§ 1500-1588). This notice announces the availability of the draft EA for a 45-day public review and comment period. The Notice of Availability includes the date by which the 45-day public review and comment period will conclude. After consideration of all additional public comments, the Coast Guard may issue a Finding of No Significant Impact or may determine the project will pose significant impacts requiring an EIS. If the Coast Guard determines an EIS is required, there will be additional opportunity for public comment in accordance with NEPA procedures for the preparation of an EIS.

The draft EA may be viewed at the following locations:

- a) Thirteenth Coast Guard District (dpw)
915 2nd Avenue
Seattle, WA 98174-1067
(Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m., except Federal holidays)
- b) East Bonner County Library
1407 Cedar Street
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864
(Monday through Thursday, 7:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. through 5 p.m., except Federal holidays)

The draft EA may also be viewed online at <https://www.regulations.gov> using docket number USCG-2018-1085.

Submit comments through the Federal eRulemaking portal at <https://www.regulations.gov> using docket number USCG-2018-1085. Comments must be submitted to the online docket at <https://www.regulations.gov> on or before the date listed in the Notice of Availability for this project. Please contact the District Bridge Manager for the 13th Coast Guard District at (206) 220-7282 for alternate instructions if you are unable to use the <https://www.regulations.gov> interface to submit comments. Anonymous comments will be accepted. All comments will be posted without change to <http://www.regulations.gov> and will include any personal information you have provided.

For more information about privacy and the docket, you may review a Privacy Act notice regarding the Federal Docket Management system in the March 24, 2005 issue of the Federal Register (70 FR 15086).

The Coast Guard intends to hold two public meetings to provide the public opportunity to submit oral and written comments on the draft EA. The two meetings will be held on Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the Ponderay Events Center, 401 Bonner Mill Way, Ponderay, Idaho, 83852. Each meeting is anticipated to last approximately two hours.

The meetings will be open to the public. Those who plan to attend a meeting and wish to present comments may request to do so through the online docket at <http://www.regulations.gov>, and will be called in order of requests received. Attendees who have not previously made a request to present comments will follow those who have already submitted a request, as time permits. If a large number of persons wish to speak, the presiding officer may be required to limit the time allotted to each speaker. The public meetings may end early if all present wishing to speak have done so. For information on facilities, services for individuals with disabilities, or to request special assistance at the public meeting, please contact the District Bridge Manager for the 13th Coast Guard District at (206) 220-7282.

A transcript of the meeting will be made available for public review approximately 30 days after the meeting. All comments will be incorporated into the official case record. Written comments and related material may also be submitted to Coast Guard personnel identified at that meeting for placement into the docket.

FOR THE DISTRICT COMMANDER:

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Steven Fischer
District Bridge Manager
U. S. Coast Guard
By direction

This is a web-searchable copy and is not the official, signed version; however, other than the signature being omitted, it is a duplicate of the official version.