

City of Castle Rock, Washington
Notice of Application and
Preliminary Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance
Al Helenberg Memorial Boat Launch Safety Improvements
November 20, 2020

Project Description

Since the construction of the Al Helenberg Memorial Boat Launch in 2010, boaters have indicated through town hall meetings and letters to the City, that streamflow velocities at the boat ramp frequently make use of the ramp difficult or even dangerous. Emergency service providers have also indicated to the City the need for safety improvements at the boat launch to access to the Cowlitz River for rescues and recovery efforts. Currently, the nearest access for emergency services to the Cowlitz River is approximately 10 miles to the south in Kelso. To address safety concerns, the City of Castle Rock proposes to install two 30-foot by 1.5-foot concrete wall sections below the OHWM to reduce streamflow velocities at the boat ramp to improve both safety and access for boaters. In addition, the City is planning on continuing the established maintenance program, which includes the removal of accumulated sediment on an as-needed basis, for another ten-years, subject to the extension of a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Project Location

The Al Helenberg Memorial Boat Launch is located approximately 1,300 feet upstream of the State Route 411 Bridge on the western shore of the Cowlitz River in the City of Castle Rock. The boat launch is accessed from a driveway located on property owned by the Castle Rock School District at 5040 Westside Highway. The parking lot, restrooms, and approach to the boat launch are located on City-owned parcel 308770100.

Required Permits and Approvals

The proposed safety improvements will require the following local, state, and federal permits and approvals:

1. City of Castle Rock SEPA Threshold Determination.
2. City of Castle Rock Shoreline Conditional Use Permit (Requires DOE review and approval).
3. City of Castle Rock Building Permit (Determination under review).
4. US Army Corps of Engineers Section 10 Individual Permit.
5. Washington State Department of Ecology Section 401 Water Quality Certification.
6. Washington State Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Use Authorization.
7. Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife Hydraulics Project Approval.

Environmental Documents and Studies

A SEPA Checklist has been prepared for the proposed project and the City of Castle Rock anticipates that it will issue a Mitigated Determination of Non-significance (DNS) for this proposal in accordance with the provisions of the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). A copy of the SEPA

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checklist submitted for the proposed project and related application materials are available for public viewing at Castle Rock City Hall, 141 A Street. However, please note that due to COVID-19 restrictions that the City Hall may not be open to visitors without an appointment. If you wish to review the project files, please call Karlene Akesson at (360) 274-8181 to make the necessary arrangements. The application materials may also be viewed online at www.ci.castle-rock.wa.us.

The project related applications, environmental studies, and documents available for review include:

1. SEPA Checklist, July 28, 2020.
2. *Critical Areas Report and Habitat Management Plan*, July 28, 2020.
3. *Cultural Resources Survey of the City of Castle Rock's Proposed Cowlitz River Boat Launch, Cowlitz County Washington*, July 30, 2007.
4. *Alternatives Analysis*, July 28, 2020.
5. *Bank Use Plan*, July 28, 2020.
6. *Al Helenberg Boat Launch Velocity Reduction Structure Alternatives Analysis*, November 1, 2016.
7. Washington State Joint Aquatics Resources Permit Application (JARPA) Form, July 22, 2020.

Measures to Avoid and Minimize Potential Adverse Impacts

The project has been designed to avoid and minimize impacts to habitats and species in the vicinity of the project area. This will be accomplished by using the following measures that have been incorporated into the design of the project and that shall be included as conditions of SCUP approval by the City:

1. Design measures:
 - a. The original plan described to the agencies proposed construction of three walls and it was reduced to two at their request.
 - b. Avoid detrimental impacts to fish during construction by constructing the temporary cofferdam.
 - c. Dewatering behind the temporary cofferdam will be directed to a tank or pond for settling before being released into the river.
2. General measures:

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- a. Any stockpiled soils from construction of the access roads and wall sections will either be hauled away the same day or covered with plastic until it is removed from the site.
 - b. During construction disturbed soils will be stabilized by grading and compaction, and installation of temporary silt fence to avoid impacts to the river from erosion.
 - c. Permanent erosion control of the site will include riprap stabilization of the riverbank and hydroseeding of the disturbed upland areas.
 - d. No equipment refueling will take place within 150 feet of the river.
3. In-water measures:
- a. Contractors will have a spill containment and pollution control plan, and their employees will be trained in its implementation.
 - b. The concrete panels will be constructed within the work area while the cofferdam is in place so that it can be constructed in the dry. Following construction, the area of construction will be cleaned of all remnants of concrete materials.
 - c. New piles will be installed mainly using a vibratory hammer. Impact hammer will be used to move the piles through hard layers necessary to reach the desired depth.
 - d. Bird deterrents taking the form of plastic or steel bird deterrent spikes will be placed atop the walls to prevent perching and impacts from bird activity. The deterrent spikes are available in lengths of 24 feet long and are intended to keep birds from landing and will not injure birds.
 - e. A soft-start technique will be used for vibratory and impact-hammer pile driving outside of the cofferdam to allow aquatic species to leave the work area before full energy is used to drive the pile.
 - f. Use of an impact hammer to install the cofferdam piling may require use of a confined bubble curtain.

Numerous state and local agencies will be involved in review and permitting of the proposal. In addition to the measures identified above, the City of Castle Rock will incorporate by reference all conditions of approval required by state and federal agencies with jurisdiction as conditions of approval of the City Shoreline Conditional Use Permit. The City will also require that an onsite pre-construction conference be conducted before written authorization to proceed will be issued. All state and federal agencies with jurisdiction will be invited to participate and to review the conditions of permit approval. Representatives of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Cowlitz County Department of Community Development, Cowlitz County Emergency Management Services, the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, the Castle Rock School District, and other interested parties will also be invited to attend.

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Proposed Mitigation of Unavoidable Impacts

The construction of the two 30-foot by 1.5-foot wall sections will permanently impact approximately 0.002 acres (90 sq. ft.) of stream channel below the OHWM. In order to construct the wall sections, 24 mature black cottonwood trees with a combined canopy of 0.45 acres (19,578 sq. ft.) will be removed from the shoreline, as well as 0.07 acres (3,188 sq. ft.) and 0.05 acres (2,271 sq. ft.) of gravel will be compacted north and south of the boat ramp (respectively) to create maintenance and construction access to the project site. A total of 0.002 acres (90 sq. ft.) of aquatic impacts are proposed waterward of the OHWM while 0.57 acres (25,037 sq. ft.) of riparian impacts are proposed landward of the OHWM.

It is important to note however, that the project site is located approximately 12 miles north of the Coweeman River Mitigation Bank (CRMB) site. The CRMB provides mitigation through the purchase of Universal Credits for projects impacting wetlands, streams, buffers, and other aquatic resources. Since one bank credit is generated for every 4 acres of upland buffer or riparian buffer restoration, a ratio of “0.25 : 1” for critical area buffer impacts results in a “1 : 1” ratio for an area on the ground of permitted buffer impact to buffer restoration by the Bank. The proposed project will directly impact 0.57 acres (25,037 sq. ft.) of the riparian buffer of the Cowlitz River which can be fully compensated for with the purchase of 0.14 universal mitigation credits.

When the aquatic habitat proposed for impact supports the presence of listed salmonid species, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has recommended the Habitat Equivalency Analysis (HEA) to quantify aquatic habitat and riparian habitat losses and gains. This method was used to determine DSAYs, which represents the quantified functional habitat loss at the project site. This analysis determined that 0.41 DSAYs are required to fully mitigate the 0.002 acre (90 sq. ft.) of aquatic habitat impact proposed by the project.

The City of Castle Rock will enter into a Purchase Agreement with Habitat Bank for mitigation credits that will appropriately mitigate for the proposed project impacts. The actual purchase of credits may occur prior to permit issuance, or upon permit issuance. However, in no case shall credits be applied (e.g. debited from the bank) to a receiving (impact) project unless and until permits have been issued for the underlying activity by the agencies with jurisdiction. Nothing in the mitigation credit Purchase Agreement shall be interpreted or construed to permit any activity that otherwise requires a federal, state, and/or local permit. Upon permit issuance and completion of purchase, the transfer will be made. Proof of the mitigation transfer will be provided in the form of a notification letter to the approving agency(s).

Public Comment Period

The application will be subject to a 28-day comment period for this integrated Notice of Application and Preliminary SEPA Threshold Determination. Written comments on the proposed project or Preliminary SEPA Threshold Determination must be mailed or emailed, **no later than December 29, 2020**, to Karlene Akesson, Deputy City Clerk, City of Castle Rock, PO Box 370, Castle Rock, WA 98611 or to kakesson@ci.castle-rock.wa.us.

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For More Information

If you have questions about the proposed safety improvements, please contact:

City of Castle Rock Project Manager: Dave Vorse, Public Works Director

Telephone: (360) 274-7478

Email: crpwd@ci.castle-rock.wa.us