

**DRAFT**  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**Canonsburg Lake, Washington County, PA**  
**Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project**  
**September 2008**

The United States, acting by and through the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District (the “Corps”) is proposing to restore the aquatic ecosystem of a portion of Canonsburg Lake that has been degraded by the inflow of excessive sediment and phosphorus loading from agricultural fertilizers. The project area is located on Little Chartiers Creek, entirely within Washington County in southwestern Pennsylvania. Alcoa Dam, which forms Canonsburg Lake, was constructed in 1943 to create a water supply source for industry. In 1958 the lake and dam was donated to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who manages it through the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

When originally constructed, the lake had a mean depth of 9.2 feet and a maximum depth of 42.6 feet at the dam. Since its completion, the lake has been filling with sediment at an approximate rate of 0.1 feet per year. In the 1980’s the maximum depth of the lake was determined to be 11.5 feet. Currently, it is estimated that the lake has lost almost 60% of its original volume. The original 76 acre lake has lost 17% of its surface area and is now about 63 acres. The resulting degradation of the aquatic habitat made the lake less suitable for desirable native, warm water fish and has decreased species diversity. The lake is now inhabited by increasing numbers of less desirable fish species, such as gizzard shad and carp that thrive in shallow, eutrophic waters.

Without any action, the current submerged aquatic habitat in Canonsburg Lake will be successively transformed by continuing sedimentation into emergent wetland, shrub/scrub wetland and finally to forested wetland. The eventual loss of the lake will adversely affect not only the fishery but also many species of wading birds, water fowl, birds of prey, as well as a host of amphibians, reptiles, insects and mammals that utilize shallow submerged aquatic habitat and emergent wetlands for all or parts of their life stages.

To restore the degraded aquatic habitat within the upper portion of Canonsburg Lake, the Corps intends to use a combination of lake dredging and in-lake sediment disposal within geotubes placed along the shore in strategic locations to create deep water habitat, submerged aquatic habitat, and high quality emergent wetland habitat that will replace very shallow mudflats of lesser value. The District formulated and evaluated thirty six alternatives including “No Action” to arrive at a recommended plan. Based upon cost effectiveness and incremental cost analyses, the District is recommending Alternative 36 which creates 13.45 acres of shallow water submerged habitat, 2.02 acres of emergent wetland habitat, 0.97 acres of riparian zone habitat, and 10.3 acres of deepwater habitat. The 26.74 acres of habitat restored under this alternative will cost approximately \$6.07 million, or roughly \$231,300 per acre. See the attached feasibility study for more detail on the formulation and evaluation of alternative plans. Alternative 36 will remove accumulated sediment from a portion of the lake bottom, enhance emergent wetland and riparian zone habitats, and reduce the likelihood of sediment deposition within the upper portion of the lake.

The Corps has coordinated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to fulfill its obligations under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and Endangered Species Act. In addition, it has coordinated with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer under the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The proposed conveyance would not affect any endangered or threatened species; however one Biological Diversity Area has been identified within the project boundaries and will be protected from disturbance. No significant cultural resources will be affected by the project. Approximately 6 acres of forested area will need to be cleared for vehicular access to the sediment and storage areas, a portion of which was previously cleared for a sewer installation. This access will affect approximately 0.01 acre of scrub-shrub/wetland. Because the forested area was recently disturbed by the laying of a pipeline, and the size of the scrub shrub wetland is so small the loss of these areas does not constitute a significant adverse effect.

Copies of the environmental assessment and draft FONSI have been sent to various federal, state and local agencies and private citizens who may have an interest in this project. In addition, a copy of the assessment and draft FONSI has been sent to the Canonsburg Public Library and has also been placed on the District's website. All comments made on the assessment and draft FONSI will be included and addressed within a new Appendix to the assessment. Copies of the revised FONSI and assessment will be sent to those who received a draft copy.

After having carefully evaluated and balanced all beneficial and detrimental aspects of the action proposed in the attached environmental assessment, including all regulatory agency input, I have reasonably concluded that the proposed project would not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and is in accordance 40 C.F.R. § 1508.13. Consequently, the preparation of an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act for this action is not warranted. The public interest will be best served by the implementation of the proposed action. Further, the proposed work is in compliance with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. There are no unresolved issues regarding environmental compliance and coordination and there are no unresolved environmental issues. This Finding of No Significant Impact precedes the Corps of Engineers' final decision on the proposed action.

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Date

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Michael P. Crall  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer