FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

MILL RIVER AND MILL POND
HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT
STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT

The proposed Federal action involves the removal of approximately 18,600 cubic yards of sediment from the Mill Pond, the removal of the Main Street Dam and the concrete retaining walls around the Mill Pond. Removing these structures will create an opportunity to restore the river channel and floodplain to Mill River Park and open 4.5 miles of the Mill River for fish passage. Alewife, blueback herring, white perch and American shad are expected to flourish in the restored river. The restored channel will effectively transport sediment and nutrients, supporting aquatic, riverbank, and floodplain habitat.

Three out of the four additional restoration actions described in Alternative 2 were also selected for implementation. The selected additional actions include: 1) enhancing the riparian corridor through planting native woody and herbaceous vegetation and removing exotic and invasive plant species; 2) creating and restoring tidal wetlands through re-grading banks and planting native salt marsh vegetation; 3) removing concrete blocks and remnant gate structures directly beneath the Pulaski Street Bridge. The additional restoration measure of creating a wetland and outdoor education area on the JM Wright Technical School grounds was not selected in the recommended plan because this action was not as cost effective as the other restoration measures assessed in Alternative 2.

As a recreational component to the project and to replace existing sidewalks and trails in the affected areas, the proposed action also includes incorporating a trail system to connect the greenway and parks along the river corridor.

Constructing wetlands in the tidal areas of the river will substantially improve foraging, spawning, and sheltering habitat. Tidal wetlands also provide ecological benefits to the Mill River by intercepting sediment, removing nutrients, remediating pollutants, and improving water quality. In the riparian areas to be restored, removing invasive plants and debris, as well as stabilizing and replanting riverbanks with native plant species, will improve riparian habitat. Habitat improvements will support local biodiversity and improve the Mill River ecosystem's health. A contiguous system of river parks, open space, and protected habitat, interlaced with a trail network, will create a wildlife corridor and provide numerous recreational opportunities for the residents of Stamford.

No significant long-term or short-term adverse impacts to the environment are anticipated. Construction will be conducted when river conditions permit minimum impact to anadromous fish migration.

My determination of a Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the Environmental Assessment and the following considerations:

a. The project will restore a historic anadromous fish corridor and increase the fisheries carrying capacity of the Mill River system. The loss of substrate in the footprint of the project does not contribute to the loss of any significant aquatic or seasonal wetland habitat, nor result in any cumulative degradation of the waters of the Mill River.

b. This project will have no known impacts on any State or Federal rare or endangered species.

c. An archaeological survey will be conducted in any location where ground-disturbing activities are proposed. Any site identified will be evaluated and mitigated if necessary, in consultation with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office.

d. Sediment loading will be minimized by dredging behind the dam prior to its removal and by employing erosion control measures. Additionally, in-water work will be restricted from May 15 through September 30 of any calendar year for the protection of summer flounder, bluefish, and their forage.

e. General Conformity under the Clean Air Act, Section 176 has been evaluated according to the requirements of 40 CFR 93, Subpart B. The requirements of this rule are not applicable to this project because the State of Connecticut does not regulate emissions for nonroad construction equipment. By requiring the road-based vehicles to comply with state emission requirements, the Mill River Section 206 Project will conform to the requirements of the Connecticut State Implementation Plan (SIP). As well, the project is not considered regionally significant under 40 CFR 93.153(i).

f. The proposed project is beneficial to wetlands and riverine systems, in effect, reversing historical degradation and incremental impacts to natural resources. No negative cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Based on my review and evaluation of the environmental effects as presented in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that the Mill River and Mill Pond Habitat Restoration Project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, I have determined that this project is exempt from requirements to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

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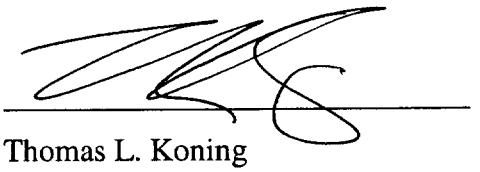
Date



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