

Pacific Right Bank Flood Protection Project Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of the Pacific Right Bank Flood Protection Project?

The project will provide improved flood protection to people who live near the White River in the City of Pacific by giving the White River channel and its floodplain more room to move and convey flood flows. The project is needed because of the loss of flood conveyance due to ongoing channel aggradation, meaning the channel is filling up with sediment. The final project will restore off-channel rearing habitat for ESA-listed Chinook salmon and improve other wildlife habitat.

2. When will the HESCO barriers be removed?

The existing temporary HESCO barriers will be removed as part of the construction of the permanent flood protection project. Because the permanent facility will likely be constructed in phases over two years, some segments of the HESCOs may remain in place longer than others.

3. Why is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being conducted?

Implementing a permanent flood protection project has the potential to impact natural and built environments, such as flooding, current land uses, fish and wildlife resources, cultural resources, health and safety, and public utilities. An EIS provides the framework for public input, to evaluate the adverse and beneficial impacts of different alternatives, and to describe the types of mitigation actions necessary to address potential impacts. The EIS prepared for this project proposal will evaluate up to four project alternatives, including a no-action alternative. The Draft EIS process includes a formal public review process and enables residents, Tribes, government agencies, and all stakeholders to comment on the alternatives.

4. What will the final project look like, and where will the levee be located?

Typical flood protection structures are earthen levees resembling a raised berm, floodwalls made of concrete and/or metal sheeting, and log or rock revetments providing erosion protection. The alignment of the flood protection project will be determined through the preparation of technical analyses, consideration of public comments, and the evaluation of the impacts of the alternatives in the EIS.

5. Why was the Countyline Project on the left bank built before constructing flood protection on the right bank, given that more houses were flooded in Pacific in 2009?

The Countyline Project was initiated in January 2008 at the time of the establishment of the King County Flood Control District. The project design concept sought to utilize the large wetland acreage to achieve flood reduction across the floodplain. Also, this undevelopable wetland area was mostly already in county ownership. The project proposal for the right bank of the river was focused only on the repair of the concrete slab revetment, until the January 2009 flood event occurred. In 2009, the King County Flood Control District recognized the need for a large-scale project for flood protection and authorized significant funding to implement temporary flood protection (i.e., HESCO barriers) and also to begin developing the elements of the permanent Pacific Right Bank Flood Protection Project.

6. When will construction start, and when will the project be completed?

Construction could start in 2021 but is dependent upon obtaining all required regulatory approvals and authorization by the King County Flood Control District. Construction is expected to occur over a period of two years, with construction activities taking place during the dry summer season.

7. Why can't sediment buildup in the river just be removed by dredging?

There is a significant quantity of sediment delivered to the Auburn/Pacific/Sumner reaches of the White River every year. The last extensive dredging of the White River channel occurred in the 1980s before there was an understanding of the environmental impacts to salmon species that depend on undisturbed river habitats. Because of these known and now well-understood impacts, obtaining permits for in-channel dredging is a lengthy process with low certainty of approval. In addition, costly sediment removal (and mitigation) would need to occur regularly and indefinitely to keep up with the quantity of sand and gravel delivered to the lower river each year. By comparison, the construction of setback levees provides more certain and reliable, long-term flood protection at a lower overall cost and allows for future sediment deposition.

8. What kind of waste is in the dump? Haven't you been investigating it? *Investigations and analyses of the waste material in the park were initiated in 2016. Additional investigations are expected to be completed this year (2018). Information from the initial investigations is available to the public and will be combined with the results of the 2018 investigation and included in the Draft EIS as part of developing and evaluating the different alternatives.*

9. Will I still be able to see the river from my house?

The EIS will evaluate views for each of the alternatives. It is likely that current views will change, but the extent to which specific views of the river will differ is not yet known.

10. Will I still have access to Pacific Park?

The park will be accessible between April and October annually until project construction begins. For safety reasons, it is likely that at least a portion of the park will be closed to the public during construction. Impacts to the park will be evaluated through the EIS process.

11. Will this project impact Pacific Park? If so, how?

At this time, temporary construction impacts and future impacts are unknown because project alternatives are not yet identified and have not yet been evaluated. Potential project impacts and any mitigation will be evaluated in the EIS.

12. Why can't you just buy out all the houses affected by flooding? Wouldn't that be easier?

Property acquisition for capital project implementation is related to obtaining only those land areas necessary for the project. Acquiring all houses at risk of flooding in the city is not feasible due to the overall impacts to the community. Options to avoid or minimize the extent of an acquisition area, including using alternative designs, are considered first. A flood protection project is the cheapest alternative to protecting the hundreds of homes, dozens of businesses, and extensive infrastructure at risk of flooding in this reach of the White River.