

Federal Emergency Management Agency
PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment
For the Columbia Canal 2015 Flood Repairs in Columbia, South Carolina

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hereby gives notice to the public of its intent to assist in the funding of a project located in the City of Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina. This notice applies to the Public Assistance (PA) grant program application for the repairs to the Columbia Canal facility damages as a result of the severe storms and flooding between October 1, 2015 and October 23, 2015. The PA grant program is implemented under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207. Under a major disaster declaration, FEMA-DR-4241-SC, signed by President Obama on October 5, 2015, Richland County was designated as adversely affected by the disaster and eligible for PA funding.

This public notice concerns activities pertaining to the City of Columbia to repair damaged components to the Columbia Canal facility to restore full drinking water intake capabilities including the ability to generate hydroelectric power. The City of Columbia proposes to remove emergency protective measures applied during the flood event, repair the existing hydroelectric plant, repair minor components to the existing spillway, repair the toe and slope areas of embankments north of the spillway up to the headgates, and reconstruct the lower canal embankment running slightly past north of the Klapman Bridge down to the hydroelectric plant including the reshaping of the canal channel.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been drafted in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508) and regulations adopted pursuant to the Department of Homeland Security Directive 023-01, Rev 01, and FEMA Directive 108-1. An alternatives analysis was performed, which included the evaluation of the proposed action and the no action alternative. Further detailed descriptions of all alternatives may be reviewed in the draft EA conducted by FEMA or by contacting FEMA-R4EHP@fema.dhs.gov for a copy. The draft EA is available for public comment and can be viewed on FEMA's and the applicant's website at the following locations:

FEMA WEBSITE LOCATION: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/nepa/environmental-assessment-city-6>

CITY OF COLUMBIA WEBSITE LOCATION:
<https://columbiascwater.net/columbiacanalproject/> & <https://flood.columbiasc.gov/>

A hardcopy of the draft EA is available for review in the Columbia City Hall located at 1737 Main Street, Columbia, SC 29201, during the following hours: Monday to Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires federal agencies to consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for effects to federally listed threatened and endangered species. On November 19, 2020, FEMA initiated informal consultation with NMFS and received concurrence on December 4, 2020 that the work may affect species, but with the conditions to be followed for work in or near the riverine habitats; work is *not likely to adversely affect* federally-listed species. On July 24, 2023, FEMA initiated informal consultation with USFWS and received concurrence on August 10, 2023 that the work may affect but *not likely to adversely affect* federally-listed species.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. FEMA consulted with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and received concurrence for a determination of *Adverse Effects to Historic Properties*. Tribal consultation letters were submitted to eleven federally recognized tribes with vested interest in Richland County, South Carolina. In addition, FEMA notified the River Alliance, Historic Columbia, the South Carolina State Museum and the South Carolina Institute for Anthropology and Archaeology, one tribe responded with no immediate concerns to resources of interest to the tribe but requested to be notified in the event of unexpected discoveries. One other tribe responded concurring with FEMA's determination of Adverse Effect to Historic Properties. To address the adverse effects to historic properties, an MOA between FEMA, three tribes, the City of Columbia, and the SHPO was executed on April 3, 2024. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation was notified of the adverse effects determination and responded with declining to participate in the MOA.

Presidential Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 require that all federal actions in or affecting the floodplain or wetlands be reviewed for opportunities to relocate and evaluated for social, economic, historical, environmental, legal, and safety considerations. The project location is located within a special flood hazard area, per Richland County Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) panel numbers 45079C0237L, 45079C0239L, 45079C0243L, and 45079C0356L, dated December 21, 2017. Wetlands within the project area include near-shore open water habitat occupied by subaquatic vegetation. FEMA completed an 8-step decision making process as part of the compliance review and is available upon request for review of the EA's appendices.

President Biden issued new Executive Orders 13985 and 14008 in January 2021 to further address the need to achieve environmental justice and equity across the federal government. The issuance of the new executive orders more than 20 years after Executive Order 12898 was signed indicates the administration's directive to federal agencies to renew their energy, effort, resources, and attention to environmental justice. FEMA is working with applicants/subapplicants to identify communities with Environmental Justice concerns and provide an avenue for local groups and non-profits with an Environmental Justice mission to self-identify so that FEMA Programs can start to work with them on specific projects from the beginning of the application process.

This will serve as the final public notice regarding the above-described action funded by the FEMA BRIC grant program. Interested persons may obtain information about these actions by emailing FEMA-R4EHP@fema.dhs.gov. Comments should be sent in writing with the subject line "FEMA PA City of Columbia Repair Project" at the above address within 30 days of the date of this notice.