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Corps announces new development in dredging on Kansas River

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Kansas City District has determined an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be necessary before dredging operations may be reauthorized in the Kansas River.

Six sand and gravel companies are currently proposing dredging operations at 12 locations in the Kansas River, and five currently have permits issued under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act valid through July 31, 2014.

A public notice concerning authorization of new permits was issued in November of 2011, and the Corps of Engineers received 382 comments from the public, with 357 in opposition to the proposed work. An Environmental Report was prepared by a consulting firm at the expense of the applicants and submitted to the Corps of Engineers for review in September of 2013. After review of the report and completion of an Environmental Assessment (EA), the Corps was unable to conclude that there are no potentially significant impacts associated with activities proposed by the dredging companies.

The National Environmental Policy Act requires a "Finding of No Significant Impact" in order for the Corps of Engineers to grant a permit following the completion of an EA. Therefore, completion of an EIS will be necessary to further investigate and consider the dredging work, assess public interest and environmental factors and reach a permit decision. The previous and only EIS prepared for consideration of dredging on the Kansas River was completed in 1990.

The information contained within the previous environmental reports supplied by the dredging applicants as well as the previous EIS and EA documents already completed will be utilized for much of the documentation and analysis required to complete a draft EIS. The public will have the opportunity during the EIS process to participate and provide comments regarding the work for consideration by the Corps of Engineers.

During the interim period prior to the completion of the EIS and new permit decisions, the current permits for dredging on the Kansas River will be extended subject to the limits and conditions of those authorizations under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act.

The Kansas River is a major source of sand and gravel for the Kansas City metropolitan area and other communities along the river, for use primarily in concrete production. The sand is hydraulically dredged from the river channel by floating dredges and the slurry is piped to onshore processing plants for separation, sorting and stockpiling.

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