



Pontoon Construction Project EIS Scoping Comments Report Addendum

March 12 – April 11, 2009

Introduction

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) team held a 30-day scoping period about the Pontoon Construction Project from March 12 to April 11, 2009 as a continuation of the scoping process that began in January 2008.

In order to meet federal environmental regulations and accelerate pontoon construction for the SR 520 bridge, WSDOT proposed to narrow the potential pontoon construction site alternatives to two. WSDOT dismissed the Port of Grays Harbor Industrial Development District #1 from the project's range of alternatives. Because this was a change to the project range of site alternatives, WSDOT initiated this comment period with a focus on the two remaining sites:

- Anderson & Middleton Hoquiam site.
- Aberdeen Log Yard site.

The intent of the scoping period is to provide an opportunity for early public review and comment on a proposed project, including all of the project alternatives and the potential environmental effects of those alternatives to be evaluated in the draft environmental impact statement (EIS).

WSDOT is advancing pontoon construction to restore the SR 520 floating bridge in the event of a catastrophic failure and to store these pontoons until they are needed. The project EIS will evaluate potential effects to the surrounding environment from constructing and storing pontoons. The two site alternatives will be fully studied in the draft EIS, which is planned for release in late 2009.

The project team solicited comments from interested citizens, government agencies, and affected tribal nations on the proposal to narrow the list of potential Pontoon Construction Project sites and to identify potentially significant issues that the team will evaluate in detail in the EIS. The project team received 78 comments during the comment period (71 from

the public and seven from agencies), which included a few comments received a few days before or after the official comment period dates.

This report summarizes the comments made by agencies and the general public and is organized into the following sections:

- 1) Agency scoping meeting and comments
- 2) Public scoping comments

Agency Scoping

A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping meeting was held with the project's cooperating and participating agencies from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. on March 12, 2009 in Olympia. Local, state, and federal agencies and tribal nations were encouraged to provide comments focusing on the proposal to narrow the range of site alternatives. A total of 14 agency representatives and four tribal representatives attended the meeting.

A total of seven comments were provided by the following participating and cooperating agencies:

- City of Aberdeen
- City of Hoquiam
- Washington Department of Natural Resources

Summary of agency responses:

Proposal to dismiss IDD #1

- Expressed support for dismissing IDD #1 from the project's range of alternatives.

Range of alternatives

- Evaluate the Anderson & Middleton site as a reasonable alternative, based on size, overall impacts to state-owned aquatic lands, proximity away from natural areas, smaller dredge prism, less shoreline armoring, and closer proximity to Grays Harbor.
- Consider public utilities and services available to the Aberdeen Log Yard site, such as rail spur, waterlines, sewer lines, and wastewater treatment.
- Understand the potential for military or security inconveniences at each site.

Natural resources

- Evaluate impacts associated with the near-shore dredging required for the needed launch channel.
- Evaluate need for shoreline armoring at each site
- Evaluate wetlands impacts associated with each site.

Pontoon moorage

- Consult with resource agencies regarding proposed moorage locations.
- Consider ocean swell, fetch, and extreme currents in Grays Harbor which could create hazardous conditions for pontoon moorage.
- Evaluate the potential effects of mooring pontoons in Grays Harbor on recreational and commercial fishing.

Built environment and cultural resources

- Conduct in-depth traffic studies to determine effects to communities.
- Consider potential impacts of rail traffic.
- Consider potential traffic effects to local schools and avoid or minimize truck traffic through school zones.
- Determine the capacity and reliability of the existing bridges across the Hoquiam River.
- Consider effects to local traffic flows.
- Consider noise levels from traffic and construction.
- Consider site proximity to truck route.
- Consider site proximity to available utilities.
- Consider alternative vehicle access points to the Aberdeen Log Yard site.

Socio-economic considerations

- The Pontoon Construction Project is of great economic importance to the Grays Harbor community.
- Conduct an in-depth economic analysis to determine the economic opportunities and risks associated with each site alternative.
- A ample labor force is available in the Grays Harbor area.
- Examine potential conflicts with existing operations, businesses, and plans.

Public Scoping

Notification

The project team used several methods to notify the public of the scoping period and to solicit comments:

- Mailed comment forms to 526 mailing addresses in the project database.
- Comment forms were placed at the following locations in Grays Harbor :
 - Aberdeen City Hall, 200 E. Market Street, Aberdeen
 - Aberdeen Timberland Library, 121 E. Market Street, Aberdeen
 - Hoquiam City Hall, 609 Eighth Street, Hoquiam
 - Hoquiam Timberland Library, 420 Seventh Street, Hoquiam
 - Grays Harbor County Administration Building, 100 W. Broadway, Montesano
- Announced the scoping period on the Pontoon Construction Project Web site.
- E-mailed the announcement to the project database contact list, including potential contractors.
- Project team members participated in the Grays Harbor Expo on March 21, 2009 and encouraged the public to submit written comments.
- SR 520 Program Director Julie Meredith participated in a KXRO AM 1350 radio interview on March 23, 2009.
- Project team members held informational briefings with the following community organizations in Grays Harbor:
 - Grays Harbor Economic Development Council
 - Olympia Master Builders Association
 - WorkSource Grays Harbor
 - Friends of Grays Harbor
 - Grays Harbor Audubon Society
 - Surfrider Foundation

Public Comments

The scoping comment form included the following questions:

- Does the proposal to dismiss the IDD #1 site change any comments that you may have previously submitted to the Pontoon Construction Project?
- Do you have any comments about narrowing the range of alternatives for the pontoon construction site?
- Do you have any specific comments about the Aberdeen Log Yard site and Anderson & Middleton Hoquiam site?
- Do you have any additional comments?

The project staff received a total of 71 public comments. 42 were received via mail and 29 comments were received via e-mail.

The public comments focused on the topics included in the following table. Most comments included multiple topics. Topics that were mentioned only once are not listed in the table.

Topic	Comments Received
EIS Alternative (sites and moorage locations)	42
Anderson & Middleton site	40
Utilities and Public Services	26
Indirect/Cumulative Impacts	25
Aberdeen Log Yard site	23
Project Phasing/Decision Making	20
Plans and Policies	18
Transportation (construction and operation)	15
Navigation and Waterways	14
Land Use and Economics	12
Financial/Funding/Costs/Sales Tax	10
Other Environmental Effects	9
Public Involvement	9
Wetlands	6
Geology and Soils	5
Ecosystems (plants and animals)	5
Water Quality/Groundwater/Stormwater/Surface Water	4
Add to mailing list	3
Schedule/Timing	3
Parks and Recreation	3
Pontoon Construction Methods	3
Pontoon Transportation	3
Agency Coordination	2
Hazardous Materials	2
Visual Quality/Aesthetics/Light and Glare	2

Proposal to Dismiss Industrial Development District #1 site

Several comments address the proposal to dismiss the IDD #1 site from the project's range of alternatives. Most conveyed general support for the proposal to dismiss the IDD #1 site, including remarks that the IDD #1 site is a popular recreation area for local residents. One commenter expressed skepticism regarding the existence of wetlands on the IDD #1 site.

Opportunities and risks identified for each site alternative

Public comments addressed the potential opportunities and risks associated with each of the two remaining sites.

Anderson & Middleton site:

Opportunities:

- Existing industrial site with fewer wetland issues.
- Proximity to Hoquiam wastewater lagoon. If the lagoon is used for fill materials, then this site may reduce traffic impacts.
- Largest site alternative may allow expansion and additional flexibility.
- Less traffic.
- Available rail access.
- Currently a vacant site.
- Less impact on recreational fishing.

Risks:

- Suggested that this site may be better suited for other industrial or commercial development.
- Increased traffic over Hoquiam River bridges.
- Lack of industrial water supply.
- Visible impacts to surrounding neighborhoods.

Aberdeen Log yard site:

Opportunities:

- Proximity to existing railroad.
- Easy access to industrial water and sewer utilities.

- May have the least impact on local traffic.
- Lower cost to develop.
- Proximity to existing utilities.

Risks:

- May be better suited for other uses and conflicts with plans for Port activities and expansion.
- May conflict with Port and rail traffic. Rail cars often block intersections in this area.
- Proximity to the Chehalis bridge may cause congestion problems for navigation.
- Disruption to local businesses.
- Potential to encounter hazardous materials from past property uses.

Summary of frequently received public scoping comment topics

Transportation (construction and operation), noise, and vibration

Community members commented on the potential impacts to local transportation, requesting improvements for paving of local streets and increased capacity. Others noted increased noise due to traffic and construction.

- Consider potential traffic effects to local schools and residential areas.
- Determine the capacity and reliability of the existing bridges across the Hoquiam River.
- Consider effects to local traffic flows.
- Consider noise levels from traffic and construction.
- Consider site proximity to truck route.

Land use and economics

Many comments expressed strong support from the community for pontoon construction in Grays Harbor County due to expected job opportunities. Several comments expressed a priority for using union labor to build the pontoons.

- Consider the need for increased job development in Grays Harbor.
- Encourage union labor.
- Recognize the labor force available in Grays Harbor.

- Clarify the long-term use of the property and long-term economic opportunities.
- Consider effects on local businesses.
- Consider site acreage and potential for expansion and flexibility.
- Conduct an in-depth economic analysis to determine the economic opportunities and risks associated with each site alternative.

Utilities and public services

Several scoping comments addressed the importance of considering the proximity and capacity of local public utilities to serve the pontoon construction site.

- Proximity to potential fill sites for excavation materials.
- Access to industrial water lines and city sewer.
- Location of existing rail lines and potential for rail spur expansion.
- Potential for rail conflicts.

Navigation, waterways, geology and soils, and water quality

Public comments discussed the potential effect of the project on waterways and navigation.

- Consider dredge requirements and impacts for each site.
- Consider the effects to navigation patterns.
- Evaluate the likelihood of encountering hazardous materials.
- Determine proximity to existing dock facilities.

Funding and costs

Several comments addressed the overall funding and cost for the Pontoon Construction Project.

- Provide information regarding the cost associated with developing each site.
- Develop the most economical site.

Wetlands and ecosystems

Public comments addressed the potential effects on fish, wildlife and species habitat.

- Consider the site with the least impacts to shorelines and wetlands.

- Grays Harbor remains a shallow and fragile estuary. WSDOT should review sites outside of Grays Harbor, including those in Canada which may have less damaging adverse impacts.

The complete text of all comments is available upon request. Please contact us at pontoons@wsdot.wa.gov or call the project hotline at 1-888-520-NEWS (6397).

Please visit our project Web site for more information:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520/Pontoons>.