

Comments sought on Draft Integrated Letter Report and Programmatic Environmental Assessment for federal participation in operating watercraft inspection stations within the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming, and Utah to protect the Upper Colorado River Basin.

Albuquerque, N.M. – A draft integrated letter report and programmatic environmental assessment (Programmatic EA) has been developed to determine the economic and environmental impacts of federal participation in state-managed watercraft inspection programs within the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Utah to protect the Upper Colorado River Basin. Comments on the draft Programmatic EA will be accepted during the public review period from Monday, April 3, 2023, until Monday, April 17, 2023.

The existing watercraft inspection programs are managed collaboratively by the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming, and Utah, where watercraft are inspected for the presence of aquatic invasive species and decontaminated when detected. If approved, federal participation in the program would be cost-shared (50 percent) with each of the states and would employ a regional strategy to identify locations that would provide the greatest likelihood of preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species into and out of waters of the United States within the Upper Colorado River Basin. Several strategies that could be used include (1) expanding the number of locations or hours of operation at existing inspection stations, (2) adding canine detection capabilities, (3) increasing public awareness, (4) constructing site improvements and (5) augmenting existing monitoring efforts and contingency and response planning efforts.

The Draft FONSI and this LR/Programmatic EA were distributed to relevant Federal, state, and local agencies, the Services, the Tribes, and the public for a 30-day review and comment period from October 26, 2020, through November 26, 2020. All comments that were received at that time were addressed. Due to editorial changes made to this LR/Programmatic EA based on USACE policy and legal review, coupled with the extended time finalizing the document, USACE deemed it necessary to conduct a second public review, beginning on April 3, 2023, and concluding on April 17, 2023.

The public is encouraged to provide comments on the draft Programmatic EA which is available for viewing at <https://www.spa.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Environmental-Compliance-Documents/Environmental-Assessments-FONSI/> . Comments can be emailed to: Upper.Colorado.River.Watercraft.Inspection.Stations@usace.army.mil or mailed to: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District; ATTN: Dana Price, Watercraft Inspection EA; 4101 Jefferson Plaza NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109. Comments must be postmarked or received no later than April 17, 2023.

The draft Programmatic EA was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), USACE regulations for implementing NEPA (33 CFR 325 and Engineering Regulation 200-2-2) and other applicable environmental laws and regulations.