

quality, energy needs, safety, and the general needs and welfare of the people. If applicable the DEIA will also apply guidelines issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, under the authority of Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (Pub. L. 95-217).

6. The public involvement program will include workshops, meetings, and other coordination with interested private individuals and organizations, as well as with concerned Federal, state and local agencies. Coordination letters and newsletters have been sent to appropriate agencies, organizations, and individuals on an extensive mailing list. Additional public information will be provided through print media, mailings, and radio and television announcements.

7. In addition to the Corps, Howard County and the Maryland Department of the Environment, other participants that will be involved in the study and DEIS process include the following: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. Geological Survey; Natural Resource Conservation Service; and Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The Baltimore District invites potentially affected Federal, state, and local agencies, and other organizations and entities to participate in this study.

8. The DEIS is scheduled to be available for public review in the spring of 1998.

Dr. James E. Johnson,
Chief, Planning Division.

[FR Doc. 97-3046 Filed 2-6-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3710-41-M

Corps of Engineers

Intent to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Upper North Branch Potomac River Environmental Restoration Feasibility Study, Maryland and West Virginia

AGENCY: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DOD.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Baltimore District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is initiating the Upper North Branch Potomac River Environmental Restoration Feasibility Study. The riparian and aquatic environmental integrity of this has been severely degraded by urbanization, acid mine drainage and industrial encroachment. Potential environmental restoration of streambanks and remediation of wetlands and forest

buffers could restore several acres of riparian and aquatic habitat, in addition to improving water quality, low base flows, and sedimentation. A DEIS will be integrated into the feasibility study to document existing conditions, project actions, and project effects and products. The non-Federal sponsors for the project are the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and the West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions about the proposed action and DEIS can be addressed to Ms. Erika Hieber, Study Manager, Baltimore District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: CENAB-PL-P, P.O. Box 1715, Baltimore, Maryland 21203-1715, telephone (410) 962-4633. E-mail address: erika.j.hieber@ccmail.nab.usace.army.mil

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: 1. The U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Public Works and Transportation, authorized the North Branch Potomac River Water Resources Feasibility Study in a resolution adopted May 13, 1993.

2. The Upper North Branch watershed of the Potomac River extends from the Potomac River headwaters down to the Jennings Randolph Lake. The study area includes portions of Garret and Allegeny counties in Maryland, and portions of Grant and Mineral Counties in West Virginia. A particular focus of this study is the Corps of Engineers' multi-purpose Jennings Randolph Lake. The most significant problems in the Upper North Branch watershed are acid mine drainage, the loss of biodiversity, and water quality degradation. As a result, environmental resources and aquatic habitats have become degraded.

3. A watershed study is being conducted to investigate the feasibility of restoring the habitat and environmental integrity of the Upper North Branch watershed. The purpose of this study is to develop an ecosystem restoration plan that will address improvement of aquatic and terrestrial habitat, water quality, and recreation. The goal of this study is to improve the aquatic and riparian ecosystem within the Upper North Branch watershed. To achieve this goal, the Corps will further define the problems and opportunities in the Upper North Branch watershed; analyze and forecast environmental resource conditions; formulate, evaluate, and compare alternative plans for multiple sites; develop detailed designs and costs at selected sites; and recommend a cost effective plan for the Upper North Branch watershed. The

proposed environmental restoration plan would potentially include a evaluation of acid mine drainage sites that individually contribute to a significant amount of the acid loading in the watershed. To accomplish the proposed environmental restoration plan, an alternative analysis will be conducted. The analysis would include an evaluation of passive and active acid mine drainage treatment and control technologies that would improve degraded aquatic habitat and water quality by neutralizing acidity, decreasing metal concentrations, and raising pH levels.

4. The decision to implement these actions will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed activities on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal will be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable costs. The Baltimore District is preparing a DEIS which will describe the impacts of the proposed projects on environmental and cultural resources in the study area and the overall public interest. The DEIS will be in accordance with NEPA and will document all factors which may be relevant to the proposal, including the cumulative effects thereof. Among these factors are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, and the general needs and welfare of the people. If applicable, the DEIS will also apply guidelines issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, under the authority of Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-217).

5. The public involvement program will include workshops, meetings, and other coordination with interested private individuals and organizations, as well as with concerned Federal, state and local agencies. Coordination letters and newsletters have been sent to appropriate agencies, organizations, and individuals on an extensive mailing list. Additional public information will be provided through print media, mailings, and radio and television announcements.

6. In addition to the Corps, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection, and other participants that will be involved in the study and DEIS process

include the following: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. Geological Survey; Natural Resource Conservation Service; and the U.S. National Park Service. The Baltimore District invites potentially affected Federal, state, and local agencies, and other organizations and entities to participate in this study.

7. The DEIS is tentatively scheduled to be available for public review in the winter of 1998.

Dr. James F. Johnson,

Chief, Planning Division.

[FR Doc. 97-3047 Filed 2-6-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3710-41-M

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Policy and Planning Guidance for Community Transition Activities

AGENCY: Office of Worker and Community Transition, Department of Energy.

ACTION: Notice of interim guidance and opportunity for public comment.

SUMMARY: The Department of Energy today publishes for public comment Interim Guidance for Community Transition Activities that has been issued primarily for the benefit of field organizations and community reuse organizations responsible for implementing and administering a financial assistance program to alleviate the adverse impact of downsizing defense nuclear facilities on affected local economies.

DATES: Written comments (7 copies) are due on or before April 8, 1997. The interim guidance is effective March 10, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Comments must be submitted to: U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Worker and Community Transition, WT-1, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Deborah Swichkow, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585, (202) 586-0876.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Pursuant to the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (AEA), the Department of Energy (DOE) owns defense nuclear facilities in various locations in the United States that are operated by management and operating contractors. As a result of the end of the Cold War, many of these facilities are undergoing work force

restructuring that often has a significant impact on local economies. The Atomic Energy Act of 1954 contains broad authority to adopt and carry out policies, subject to the availability of appropriations, for downsizing these facilities and for alleviating the adverse impacts on affected local communities. 42 U.S.C. 2201.

Section 3161 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1993, 42 U.S.C. 7274h, provides additional and specific authority for DOE to provide impact assistance to communities that are adversely affected by work force restructuring. Section 3161 further requires DOE to coordinate the provision of such assistance with programs carried out by the Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Defense. In devising a local impact assistance program under section 3161, DOE has chosen to follow the example of the Department of Defense under the Defense Economic Adjustment, Diversification, Conversion, and Stabilization Act of 1990 (Pub. L. 101-510) which is referenced in section 3161. Like the Department of Defense, DOE has developed a financial assistance program that, for the most part, consists of awards to broadly representative, community reuse organizations (CROs) who either expend or sub-award the funds for projects to stimulate the local economy under an approved Community Transition Plan developed with public input. CROs may be governmental or non-governmental organizations. If a CRO is non-governmental and applies for financial assistance, it would have to be organized under local law and be able to enter into, and assume the obligations of a DOE financial assistance agreement. Although section 3161 does not require CROs, DOE use of such organizations is consistent with the Congressional requirement to coordinate the provision of local impact assistance, as appropriate, with the Department of Defense programs under the Defense Economic Adjustment, Diversification, Conversion, and Stabilization Act.

The award and administration of DOE financial assistance agreements is subject to generally applicable regulations set forth at 10 CFR part 600. The interim guidance in this notice supplements those regulations and provides a general decision making framework to guide the exercise of discretion by DOE field organizations. Issuing policy in the form of guidance allows for greater flexibility to modify policy if the facts and circumstances warrant modification.

Various aspects of the interim guidance appeared previously in DOE's

August 24, 1994, Report on the Department of Energy's Worker and Community Transition Program. Today's notice will clarify the roles and responsibilities of DOE Headquarters, DOE field organizations, and CROs. The interim guidance is subject to revision in light of public comments received in response to this notice.

II. Description of Key Provisions

Although this notice contains policies applicable to funding decisions in DOE Headquarters, for the most part, it contains interim guidance to DOE field organizations on economic development activities of CROs, approval of CRO plans to expend funds, evaluation criteria for funding decisions, CRO performance measures and reporting.

Much of the interim guidance is self-explanatory. This document highlights policy decisions embodied in various provisions of the interim guidance that may be of interest to members of the public. First, the financial assistance is targeted on communities substantially impacted by work force restructuring plans under section 3161 for "defense nuclear facilities" which are listed in Appendix B to the interim guidance.

Second, the CROs are intended to be broadly and fairly representative of local community interests. To that end, the interim guidance contains minimum evaluation criteria at paragraph II.C.3 for approving CROs that all DOE field organizations should follow. The interim guidance also provides for application of the conflict of interest avoidance policy in 10 CFR 600.142 to all subagreements under a financial assistance agreement including, but not limited to, subcontracts, subgrants, loans, etc.

Third, the interim guidance provides for start-up, planning, administrative, and project financial assistance, and indicates the range of amounts of assistance for each type of activity. These ranges are based on experience with pilot activities financed by local impact assistance grants already awarded under section 3161. The evaluation criteria provide for consideration of cost-sharing offered by an applicant. However, cost-sharing is not a requirement because DOE does not believe Congress intended that assistance be denied for proposals from sources who are unable to offer cost sharing.

Fourth, consistent with DOE's experience in this program, the interim guidance provides for program and project assistance for sources other than CROs. These provisions are useful because some CROs prefer to serve in an advisory role in the selection of projects