

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Tulsa District

Public Notice

Reply To:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ATTN: Regulatory Office 1645 South 101st East Avenue Tulsa, OK 74128-4609 SWT-2013-51 Public Notice No.

October 11, 2013 Public Notice Date

November 11, 2013 Expiration Date

PURPOSE

The purpose of this public notice is to inform you of a proposal for work in which you might be interested and to solicit your comments and information to better enable us to make a reasonable decision on factors affecting the public interest.

SECTION 10

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is directed by Congress through Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 USC 403) to regulate all work or structures in or affecting the course, condition, or capacity of navigable waters of the United States. The intent of this law is to protect the navigable capacity of waters important to interstate commerce.

SECTION 404

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is directed by Congress through Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344) to regulate the discharges of dredged and fill material into all waters of the United States. These waters include lakes, rivers, streams, mudflats, sandflats, sloughs, wet meadows, natural ponds, and wetlands adjacent to other waters. The intent of the law is to protect these waters from the indiscriminate discharge of material capable of causing pollution and to restore and maintain their chemical, physical, and biological integrity.

NOTICE TO PUBLISHERS

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Application Number SWT-2013-51

PUBLIC NOTICE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS (30-DAY COMMENT PERIOD)

Interested parties are hereby notified that the District Engineer (DE) has received an application for a Department of the Army permit pursuant to Sections 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The application is for an expansion of the River Spirit Casino that has six major components. The components are a hotel facility and lobby, theater, conference center, casino expansion project, trail relocation, and the expansion of an existing parking garage. The applicant considers the expansion of the existing casino facilities as necessary to support additional hospitality and entertainment operations on Indian Trust land. The project is known as "Margaritaville."

Name of Applicant: Principal Chief George Tiger Muscogee (Creek) Nation Post Office Box 580 Okmulgee, OK 74447 Name of Agent: Mr. Gaylon Pinc, P.E. PMg Native, LLC 601 South Boulder, Suite 1200 Tulsa, OK 74119

Location: The proposed project is located in the Arkansas River in Sections 7 and 18, Township 18 North, Range 13 East, in Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma. The project site can be found on the Jenks, OK 7.5 Minute USGS Quadrangle map.

Latitude North: 36.04809

Longitude West: 95.96858 Decimal Degrees

Purpose:

The basic purpose of this work is to expand facilities to increase the gaming area, and recreational and entertainment opportunities in the Tulsa area.

A water dependency determination is not required since no special aquatic sites are located within the project site.

The overall purpose of this work is to reclaim land and stabilize a portion of the Arkansas River that has been severely eroded.

History:

The project site has been in tribal ownership since the 1800s, when the Nation was relocated to Indian Territory. The riverbank flood plain was not developed by the Nation for many decades because of its remote location, lack of utility service, and degraded and eroded condition. The Nation participated in the development of the Arkansas River Corridor Master Plan (ARCMP)

prepared by INCOG and the Corps, which was completed in October 2005. The ARCMP has been adopted by the City of Tulsa and Tulsa County as part of the respective comprehensive plans. This plan covers 42 miles of river within Tulsa County.

Phase I of the resort casino facility was completed in March 2009, which consisted of a 300,000 square foot (sq ft) facility. The event center is a remodeled bingo hall constructed in the 1980s. The existing seating capacity is 900 which is much less than other venues in the Tulsa area. The site conditions and facility layout is disconnected, inefficient, and inconvenient to customers and vendors. The proposed development plan is based on correcting many of the site constraints to make the campus more connected and unified in its appearance and functionality.

Phase II are recommendations from the proprietary project feasibility/market study in 2012, which detailed many recommendations and the need for development potential. Phase II would be connected and fully integrated into Phase I improvements and include the following major conceptual components. These components have been identified as necessary to meet the financial goals of the project and Nation. The upscale hotel has 500 rooms, including a mix of VIP suites, junior suites, parlor suites, and standard rooms. A 45,000 sq ft convention/special events center, a 2,400 seat themed theatre/showroom entertainment venue, a 50,000 sq ft additional gaming area branded by a nationally recognized entertainment developer, a 1,500 space multi-level parking garage, a river trail access that includes an Arkansas River overlook, and a boat docking area immediately adjacent the pedestrian/cycling trail. There are no other venues of this type in south Tulsa.

<u>Site Constraints</u>: The Nation has a narrow parcel of land that is constrained by permanent manmade features or imposed restrictions that cannot move. The project borders a federally funded flood control project (Joe Creek Ecosystem Restoration project), four-lane divided roadway (Riverside Drive), Bald Eagle preserve, and the Arkansas River. According to the applicant the Arkansas River is the only area reclaimable and in need of improvements and stabilization. The site must be enlarged, improved, and stabilized along the riverbank to accommodate the expansion project.

<u>Community Need</u>: The project would reroute the River Parks Trail that runs in front of the casino on a wide sidewalk along Riverside Drive. There are numerous places along the trail where daily conflicts may arise between drivers, runners, cyclist, and pedestrians using the trail. The project would reconstruct and stabilize the riverbank area where the trail is to be relocated, and provide a safe and scenic area along the banks of the Arkansas River.

<u>Description of Work</u>: The applicant proposes the placement of fill material into jurisdictional waters within 505 linear feet (lf) of Fred Creek (FC) and approximately 1,100 lf of a low-flow channel of Joe Creek (JCLFC), both stream channels are within confluence of the Arkansas River following the left descending bank. Approximately 18.76 acres of earthen fill material would consist of mixed rock material and sand to be excavated from within the Arkansas River channel and distributed to project areas as part of the improvement project (See Figure 1, Enclosure 10).

Location	Sand	Soil	Rock	Concrete	Total(cys)	Acres
AR1	2,875	611	620		4,106	2.55
AR2	15,500	4,502	2,200		22,202	2.75
AR3	16,500	5,490	5,490		27,480	1.42
AR4	5,000	996	3,000		8,996	0.93
AR5	100,100	39,929	4,000	250	144,279	9.94
S02B (JCLFC)	12,063	4,021	4,021		20,105	0.75
S03 (FC)	1,133	210	550	2,333	4,226	0.42
Project Total	153,171	55,759	19,881	2,583	231,394	18.76

The placement of fill material within the Arkansas River and the method of removing the accumulated sediment is a "discharge" of dredged material. This includes the addition, placement, or redistribution of dredged or excavated materials within waters of the United States. A total of approximately 231,394 cubic yards (cys) of earthen material would be used to reclaim land to construct the casino expansion area. The eroded riverbank would be reformed using a combination of the adjacent river sand, select fill, topsoil and armoring comprised of manmade stone and natural stone material, and geotextile fabric for stabilization. A 3,400 lf bank stabilization project would be constructed using vegetated riprap and would tie into the stabilization work of the Joe Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project to FC right descending bank and from FC left descending bank to the end of the project boundary. In FC, the concrete lined channel would be extended 250 lf using reinforced concrete or large block system or a similar concrete lined trapezoidal channel.

The proposal includes the construction of two pedestrian bridges, one vehicular bridge over FC, a proposed overlook, a boat ramp, an observation area, and a new pedestrian and biking trail that extends from Joe Creek to the southern end of the property. These bridge construction projects would be authorized under Nationwide Permit 14 for Linear Transportation Crossings.

The applicant has also proposed to use concrete and reinforced concrete around stormwater outfall structures made of precast reinforced concrete pipes and box structures.

Work would be done using wheeled and tracked excavation equipment (backhoes, track hoes, dozers, dump trucks, and front-end loaders), drilling rigs, concrete trucks, concrete pumping equipment, compactors, and graders.

<u>Avoidance and Minimization Information</u>: The applicant provided the following statement with regard to how avoidance and minimization of impacts to aquatic resources was incorporated into the project plan:

The applicant's original request was for restoration of 30 acres of land that has been lost from erosion along the left descending bank and to fill in 3,000 lf of JCLFC with no commercial development or mitigation proposal. The current proposal is for the restoration of 18.76 acres to reduce the expansion of the project site toward the Arkansas River between Joe Creek and FC. This reduced the potential impacts on the flood plain channel from 3,000 lf to 1,100 lf.

Approximately 1,900 lf of JCLFC would be avoided and therefore not affected under revised project design.

Four alternative configurations were considered during the preliminary design of the project. The alternatives evaluation was multifaceted and included factors such as site constraints, environmental impacts, avoidance, public safety, economics, site and neighborhood aesthetics, public access, and hydraulic impacts.

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 2: This proposal avoids approximately 1,200 lf of JCLFC. This option is not feasible in that the avoidance of the upper channel reach results in a narrow land area between the security building and the proposed trail alignment. Such an alignment is not feasible because without removing existing structures and using existing parking area, it precludes authorized emergency vehicle access behind the existing and new buildings. Approximately 1,800 lf of JCLFC would be filled in this option between Joe Creek and FC.

Alternative 3: This proposal includes the same basic construction configuration for the trail and new embankment as Alternative 2, impacting 1,800 lf of JCLFC between Joe Creek and FC for a total impact on JCLFC of 3,000 lf, with the addition of the relocation of JCLFC along 2,500 lf of the new embankment. In this option, the JCLFC in the flood plain channel would be replaced along the embankment for nearly the entire length of the original channel. This alternative would have impacted approximately 29.5 acres of riverine area and intermittent stream, but was determined to be infeasible due to the amount of river and intermittent stream impacts associated with the project construction, and the resulting mitigation requirements could not be achieved feasibly.

Alternative 4: This proposal includes the same basic construction configuration for the trail and new embankment as Alternative 2, impacting 1,100 lf of JCLFC between Joe Creek and FC, and is for the restoration of 18.76 acres. Approximately 1,900 lf of JCLFC would be avoided and therefore not affected under revised project design and approximately 1,100 lf of JCLFC would be reconstructed along new embankment. The existing security building will be relocated and some surface parking would be converted to a portion of the pedestrian trail and emergency vehicle service road. Due to the minimization in the alternative, a portion of the emergency vehicle access road and the pedestrian trail will be combined during emergencies to avoid stream impacts upstream of the FC confluence. This alternative avoids approximately 10.7 acres of impact when compared to Alternative 3 impacts. By sacrificing the existing security building and portions of surface parking to construct the public pedestrian trail and emergency vehicle road, these needed amenities can be built without impacting much of the bank area between Joe Creek and upstream of FC. This is the applicant's preferred option for the final project implementation (Current Proposal).

<u>Mitigation</u>: The applicant has proposed compensatory mitigation for the unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources expected from the proposed project:

The Nation has proposed to provide compensatory mitigation for these unavoidable impacts. The mitigation plan includes planting native species of riparian vegetation along the stabilized bank using a vegetated riprap method. The JCLFC would be reconstructed at the base of the new embankment using natural channel design principles. The reconstructed channel would incorporate root wads, grade control structures, variation in plan form (sinuosity) and profile (bed elevation), with a stable cross-sectional geometry comparable to that of the existing channel. The proposal is designed to enhance the habitat beyond existing conditions. Native vegetation would be incorporated into the design for habitat and structural function. The stream mitigation actions would include installation of natural erosion and sediment control measures in the eroded areas by application of bioengineering bank stabilization techniques and reduction of sediment sources in the immediate watershed. The use of riprap along the toe of the embankments, combined with installation of native plants and materials, would provide habitat enhancement and stabilize the streambank. Any construction activities impacting the elevations would be coordinated with the Corps prior to construction. The final design configuration will be dictated by local geomorphic and hydraulic characteristics, so as to maximize the associated function and habitat benefits of the site. The mitigation work plan would enhance segment S03 by removing and controlling invasive exotic species with herbicide applications conducted by licensed contract personnel. The overall goal is to restore the riparian corridor to a forested/shrub state that will provide a buffer to the stream channel. The vegetative community would consist of upland and facultative trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Planted specimens would include stockpiled trees and trees acquired through a native plant nursery. The planted species would range in size but typically include: forbs 1 gallon pots; shrubs 3-gallon pots; and trees 10 and 15-gallon pots. Trees would be planted at 20 feet on center, shrubs at 10 feet on center, and forbs at 2 feet intervals. The tree species include silver maple, American sycamore, black willow, American elm, green ash, eastern redbud, and hackberry. The Nation's mitigation work plan, mitigation goals and objectives, mitigation site selection and justification, performance standards (success defined as 80% survival rate of plantings), site protection and maintenance, monitoring plans (proposed 5 years), adaptive management plan, contingency plan, and financial assurances would be finalized after the comment period.

The Corps has made no determination at this time with regard to the adequacy of the proposed mitigation relative to the federal mitigation rules and guidance, including Tulsa District's Mitigation and Monitoring Guidelines. The Corps is accepting comments on the need for and nature of the proposed mitigation, in addition to comments on the applicant's primary proposal. The Corps bears the final decision on the need for and extent of mitigation required, if the project proposed herein is authorized.

<u>Project Setting</u>: This project is located within the city limits of Tulsa, in the Oklahoma ecoregion of Osage Cuestas, which is part of the Central Irregular Plains geomorphic province. The transition is characterized by a series of tall grass prairie and oak-hickory forests that are native to eastern areas. The project is located within a sparse riparian corridor that provides shading for a perennial stream channel.

<u>Existing Condition</u>: The project area is on the left descending bank of the Arkansas River, which has eroded the river bottom primarily comprised of rock, sand, and silts; which is surrounded by the Tulsa metropolitan area.

<u>Plans and Data</u>: Plans showing the location of the proposed activity and other data are enclosed with this notice (Enclosures 1 through 10). If additional information is desired, it may be obtained from Mr. Marcus Ware, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tulsa District, ATTN: Regulatory Office, 1645 South 101st East Avenue, Tulsa, OK 74128-4609, or telephone 918-669-7403.

<u>Cultural Resources</u>: The DE has consulted the National Register of Historic Places, and has determined that there are no properties currently listed in the National Register which would be directly affected by the proposed work. The DE has also consulted the listing of Eligibility Determinations for Oklahoma and determined that the proposed project is not in the vicinity of properties eligible for listing. This public notice is also being sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer and to Native American Tribal governments to reveal if other known historic or archeological resources that might be eligible for listing in the National Register exist in the project area and which could be directly affected by the proposed work. This coordination is being done to fulfill our requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and associated historic preservation laws. If we are made aware, as a result of comments received in response to this notice, or by other means, of specific archeological or other historic properties which might be affected by the proposed work, the DE will immediately take the appropriate action necessary pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), as amended, and 36 CFR Part 800, in accordance with implementing regulations 33 CFR Part 325, Appendix C.

<u>Threatened and Endangered Species</u>: The following federally-listed species are known to occur in the vicinity or are listed for the county in which the proposed action is located: American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum*), and piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*). A copy of this notice is being furnished to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and appropriate state agencies. This notice constitutes a request to those agencies for information on whether any other listed or proposed-to-be-listed endangered or threatened species may be present in the area which would be affected by the proposed activity.

The applicant has proposed compensatory mitigation for the unavoidable impacts to threatened and endangered species expected from the proposed project:

The Nation has proposed to construct a new 5-acre least tern island to offset potential impacts to the least tern nesting habitat located near the project site. The island would be constructed in the upstream portion of the proposed project site and should have near-neutral hydraulic impacts. Additional sand would be placed in the river to construct a long oval-shaped island. The island will provide an additional surface area of 1.5 acres of least tern nesting habitat at riverflows of 20,000 cubic feet per second and 2.5 acres at riverflows of 12,000 cubic feet per second. The material will include coarse sand and some gravel. The changes to streamflow resulting from the proposed least tern island were modeled using HEC-RAS and 2013 contour data and the difference between the 100-year flood in

existing and with project condition were negligible. The island would be armored to protect it from potential future erosion that may result from riverflows. Armoring techniques would be considered using the design strategies described in the USFWS Biological Opinion of COE, Tulsa Projects and in the Oklahoma State University paper, *Designing an Island Habitat for the Interior Least Tern* (2003). A sign would be posted on the island to deter human disturbance. A moat would be included around the entire island to deter predators and human disturbance and no sandbars would be created near the island that could provide access for predators. The maintenance of the least tern island is the sole responsibility of the Nation and would involve periodic removal of any tall vegetation (trees, willows, etc.) during non-nesting seasons (September through April) to reduce predators. The Nation will collaborate with the Corps, Tulsa District for the annual monitoring efforts.

Our preliminary determination is that the proposed activity will not affect listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat, if the work in the river is completed outside of the nesting season of the interior least tern. The IPAC Consultation Tracking Number is 02EKOK00-2013-SLI-0919. The proposed project would require Section 7 consultation if the work is performed during the nesting season of the interior least tern or would cause a negative effect to the existing least tern islands.

Environmental Considerations: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity and its intended use 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 must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownerships, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. A permit will be denied if the discharge does not comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's 404(b)(1) guidelines. Subject to the 404(b)(1) guidelines and any other applicable Guidelines or criteria, a permit will be granted unless the DE determines that it would be contrary to the public interest.

<u>Comments</u>: The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Comments concerning the issuance of this permit should be received by the DE no later than 30 days from the date of this public notice. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition, or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity. Any person may request in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing.

At the request of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board's National Flood Insurance Program State Coordinator, we are sending a copy of this notice to the local Floodplain Administrator to apprise the administrator of proposed development within their jurisdiction. In accordance with 44 CFR Part 60 (Flood Plain Management Regulations Criteria for Land Management and Use), participating communities are required to review all proposed development to determine if a flood plain development permit is required. The local Floodplain Administrator is required to perform this review for all proposed development and maintain records of such review.

Comments concerning water quality impacts will be forwarded to the Environmental Protection Agency for consideration in issuing a water quality Section 401 certification for the proposed project. Work may **not** commence until decisions have been made on both Sections 401 and 404.

<u>Federal Government Comment Agency</u>: Due to shutdown of the Federal Government, all Federal agencies affected by furlough will be allowed to provide comments after the comment period ends. Please contact the Corps for a new comment closure date.

Andrew R. Commer Chief, Regulatory Office

Enclosures



SWT-2013-51 River Spirit Casino Expansion Project Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma Enclosure 1 of 10





- A EXISTING STREAM AREA TO REMAIN
- B PROPOSED STREAM MITIGATION RELOCATION AREA WITH BANK STABILIZATION SEE FIGURES 6, 7 & 8 - -
- C BANK STABILIZATION USING VEGETATED GEOGRIDS SEE FIGURE 9 = = =
- D BANK STABILIZATION USING NATIVE STONE RIPRAP _______
- E IMPERVIOUS CHANNEL EXTENSTION OF FRED CREEK
- F PROPOSED OVERLOOK
- G EXISTING BANK LINE
- STREAM ENHANCEMENTS
- J RIPARIAN BUFFER CREATION
- K RIPARIAN BUFFER ENHANCEMENTS
- L EROSION CONTROL AT STORMWATER OUTFALLS
- M FRED CREEK CHANNEL EXTENSION INTO THE ARKANSAS RIVER

FIGURE 5 Proposed Onsite Mitigation Sites River Spirit Casino Expansion

WBG083013202132GNV F4-Proposed Onsite Mitigation Sites ai

SWT-2013-51 River Spirit Casino Expansion Project Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma Enclosure 3 of 10



- A PROPOSED CASINO & RESTAURANT COMPLEX
- B PROPOSED HOTEL TOWER
- C PROPOSED THEATER / EVENT CENTER
- D PROPOSED GARAGE EXPANSION
- E PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN / CYCLING TRAIL
- F PROPOSED TRAIL BRIDGE
- G EXISTING BRIDGE
- H PROPOSED AUTCOURT DROP-OFF
- PROPOSED VEHICULAR BRIDGE
- J PROPOSED SERVICE DRIVE BRIDGE

- K PROPOSED EVENT LAWN
- L PROPOSED SERVICE DRIVE
- M PROPOSED OVERLOOK & BOAT LANDING
- N PROPOSED STREAM MITIGATION AREA
- O PROPOSED POOL DECK AND AMENITY AREA
- P EXISTING STREAM AREA TO REMAIN
- **Q** EXISTING BANK LINE



SWT-2013-51 River Spirit Casino Expansion Project Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma Enclosure 4 of 10

FIGURE 3 River Spirit Casino Resort Illustrative Site Plan River Spirit Casino Expansion

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FIGURE 11 Arkansas River Floodplain Impact HKSS301 Site Plan and Least Tern Island River Spirit Casino Expansion CH2MHILL.

SWT-2013-51 River Spirit Casino Expansion Project Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma Enclosure 9 of 10



SWT-2013-51 River Spirit Casino Expansion Project Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma Enclosure 10 of 10 FIGURE 1 Wetlands and WOUS Impacted by the Proposed Project River Spirit Casino Expansion

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