



**SECTION 205 – FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION STUDIES,  
BLANCHARD RIVER, FINDLAY, OHIO (HANCOCK  
COUNTY) AND OTTAWA, OHIO (PUTNAM COUNTY)**

## **PUBLIC SCOPING INFORMATION PACKET**



**Findlay–Aug 2007 Flood**



**Ottawa–Aug 2007 Flood**

June 5, 2008

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District  
1776 Niagara Street  
Buffalo, NY 14207-3199

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## **BLANCHARD RIVER PARTNERSHIP**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Buffalo District, has partnered with the City of Findlay, Village of Ottawa, and Northwest Ohio Flood Mitigation Partnership (NWOFPMP). The overall goal of this partnership is to identify solutions to alleviate flooding throughout the Blanchard River Watershed. The partnership is proposing to identify problems and opportunities associated with the flood events in Findlay and Ottawa, Ohio. The objective is to identify significant issues that should be addressed during the feasibility phase of the Section 205 Flood Damage Reduction (FDR) Studies. The USACE is the Federal lead agency and is responsible for preparing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation which will be either an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EA or EIS will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the federal NEPA of 1969 and its implementing regulations, and associated rules and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The EA or EIS is also expected to satisfy the environmental review requirements of the State of Ohio.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed flood damage reduction studies at Findlay and Ottawa, Ohio. Since the flooding problems at Findlay and Ottawa affect the whole Blanchard River watershed, this Public Scoping Information Package will address issues at Findlay and Ottawa in one Information Package. The EA or EIS will evaluate the social, economic, and environmental impacts that would result with the proposed action taken to address the flooding problems at Findlay and Ottawa.

The purpose of the scoping process is to provide opportunity for the public and agencies to comment on and provide input to the plan of study for the development of the EA or EIS.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### Findlay, Hancock County, Ohio

The City of Findlay is located in northwestern Ohio approximately 50 miles south of Toledo and approximately 50 river miles upstream of the confluence of the Blanchard and Auglaize Rivers (Figure 1). The Blanchard River drains a total area of 765 square miles, 343 of which are upstream of Findlay.

The primary study area is defined as the corporate limits of the City of Findlay, Ohio. It includes the Blanchard River, Eagle Creek, and Lye Creek which meet the Blanchard River in the downtown business district. The study area will also include the entire Blanchard River Watershed including upstream areas which contribute to flooding in Findlay and downstream areas which might be impacted by any projects considered to more quickly move floodwaters through the City of Findlay.

### Ottawa, Putnam County, Ohio

Ottawa, Ohio is located in northwestern Ohio about 65 miles southwest of Toledo, Ohio (Figure 1). Ottawa is the county seat of Putnam County with a population of 4,367 at the 2000 census. The Blanchard River flows adjacent to the Village of Ottawa and floods frequently causing extensive damage.

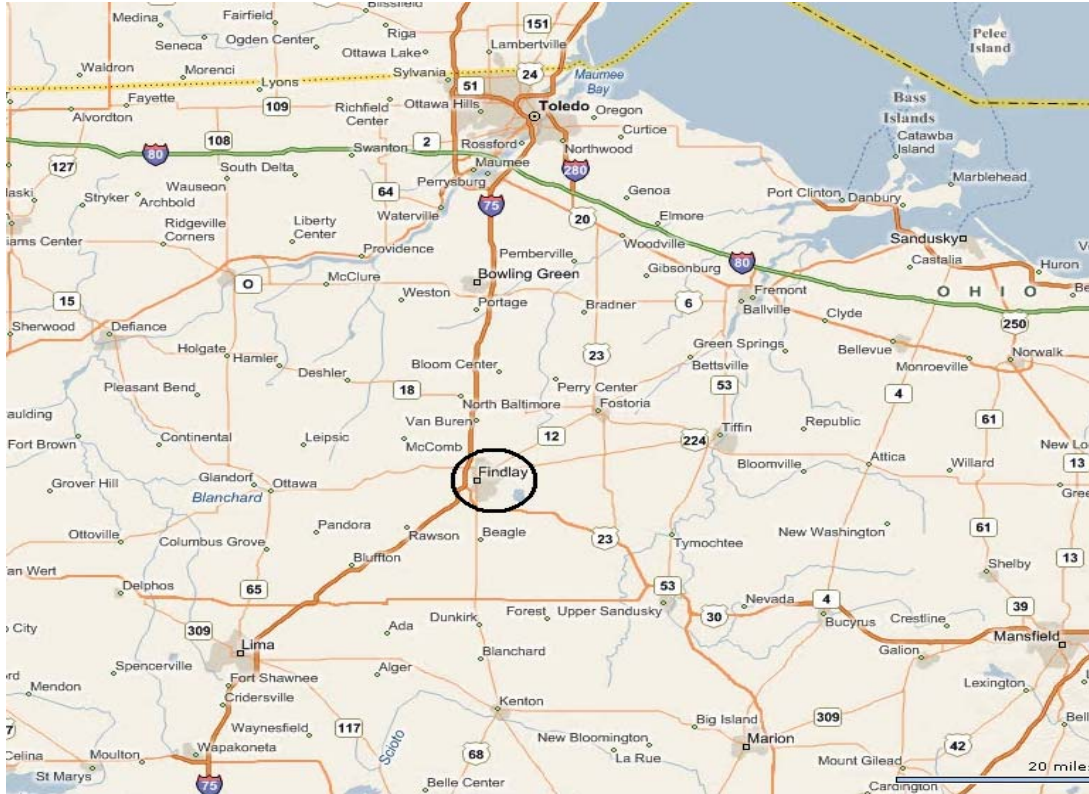
The primary study area is defined as the corporate limits of the Village of Ottawa, Ohio, particularly the downtown business district and surrounding residential areas. The study area will also include the entire Blanchard River Watershed including upstream areas which contribute to flooding in Ottawa and downstream areas which might be impacted by any projects considered to more quickly move floodwaters through the Village of Ottawa.

As previously discussed the primary problems at Findlay and Ottawa are frequent and serious flooding which inundates much of the high value downtown business districts. These frequent and at times severe floods (2006, 2007, 2008) cause extensive damage to downtown businesses and nearby residential areas. Extensive rescue operations are required during the floods and major cleanup and restoration expenses are incurred by local, State, and Federal governments.

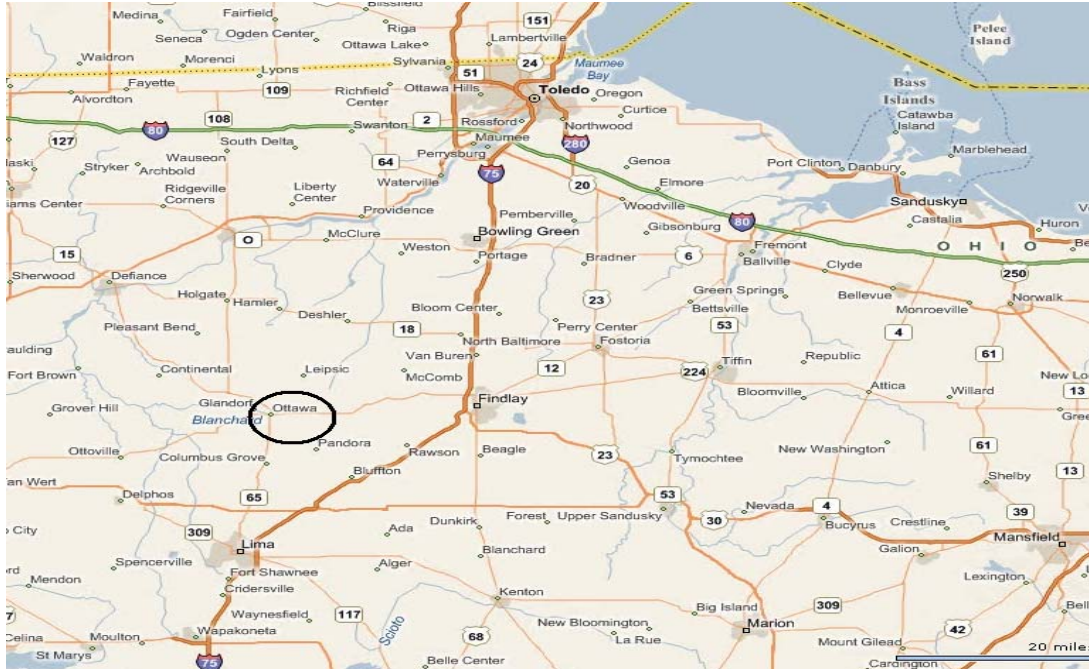
### **3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the Section 205 Flood Damage Reduction (FDR) Study for Findlay and Ottawa, Ohio are as follows:

- The primary opportunity at Findlay and Ottawa is to provide an economically justified structural or non-structural project, or list of projects, which would significantly reduce the flood damages incurred during high flow events on the Blanchard River and other tributaries.
- Identify and evaluate the frequency and severity of flooding in the City of Findlay and Village of Ottawa.
- Develop a watershed (Blanchard River) based rainfall-runoff model to determine discharge-frequency runoff hydrographs.
- Develop alternative measures and plans for flood risk management at Findlay and Ottawa.
- Reduce health and safety hazards related to flooding in the Blanchard River Watershed.
- Coordinate the study progress and results with local, State and Federal agencies, as well as, the public.
- Prepare a Section 205 Report (Detailed Project Report) for Findlay and Ottawa consistent with the guidelines contained in ER 1105-2-100 the Planning Guidance Notebook and other USACE guidance.
- Develop applicable NEPA documentation (EA or EIS) for Findlay and Ottawa. Preserve or enhance where possible, the fish and wildlife habitat resources in the Blanchard River watershed and protect the environmental quality in the project vicinity.
- To encourage wise flood related future community development policies.



Findlay, Ohio Location Map



Ottawa, Ohio Location Map

Figure 1

#### 4. PROJECT MEASURES

A management measure is a feature or activity at a site, which addresses one or more of the planning objectives. A wide variety of measures will be considered, some of which will be found not feasible due to technical, economic, or environmental constraints. Each measure will be assessed and a determination made regarding whether it should be retained in the formulation of alternative plans. The measures considered in these studies will include: no-action; levees/floodwalls; reservoirs/wetlands; diversion channels; channelization; combination channelization and berms; and non-structural (e.g. floodproofing structures).

#### 5. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In evaluating the alternative plans, the USACE addresses the following matters: enhancing national economic development (including benefits to particular regions that are not transfers from other regions); protecting and restoring the quality of the human environment (physical/natural, community, social, cultural resources); the well being of the people of the United States; the prevention of loss of life; and the preservation of cultural and historical values. In addition, the USACE considered whether there was a justified need for change.

a. No Action: Under the “No Action” plan, the USACE could take “no action” based on an evaluation of the problems and possible alternative solutions as directed by the study authority. No Action is always a possibility and forms the basis of comparison by which the other alternative plans are measured.

b. Levees/Floodwalls. This alternative stipulates that a series of earthen levees or concrete/steel floodwalls would be constructed along portions of the Blanchard River. They would be set back from the banks, where possible, to preserve and/or improve the existing riparian environment and floodway. Levees are given primary consideration over floodwalls and channelization because of lower costs and reduced adverse impacts to the natural environment.

c. Channels/Berms. This alternative would provide both channel and berm construction. In a channel/berm plan, a wider channel permits the use of berms to replace levees. The advantage is lower costs and elimination of a high, access-restricting levee or floodwall.

d. Channelization. This is a structural alternative that would consist only of channelization to provide flood control. As a design consideration due to restrictive elevations of underlying rock layers, bottom excavation of the channel would have to be kept to a minimum.

e. Diversion Channel. This is a structural alternative that would provide a diversion channel for flood protection. The diversion channel is considered another low cost improvement. The channel would divert stream flows alleviating damaging flood stages.

f. Reservoirs/Wetlands. This is a structural alternative that would utilize reservoirs and controlled reservoir releases to provide flood protection to downstream reaches.

g. Non-Structural. This alternative would not provide any substantial structural measures for flood control. The nonstructural plans investigated could be flood warning, flood proofing, permanent evacuation, flood plain regulation, and flood insurance.

(1) Flood Warning System - Such a system requires installation of a flood warning device that would be situated far enough upstream in the watershed to give adequate time for evacuating flood prone areas or erecting flood proofing measures. The shortness of the warning duration, absence of coordinating agencies, and the diverse resident locations of the parties with interests in the valley would make flood warning an impractical alternative in itself and require additional measures to create an effective alternative. Some flood warning is issued via the weather services.

(2) Flood proofing - This would incorporate permanent and temporary measures such as raising buildings, sealing windows, and temporary shields (the latter requires flood warning and action) as a means of reducing flood damages.

(3) Permanent Evacuation - Permanent evacuation of the existing developed flood plain involves the acquisition of lands by the purchaser; removal and relocation of developments; evacuation and resettlement of flood plain residents, and permanent conversions of flood plain lands to uses less susceptible to flood damage. Lands from which structures are removed would eventually provide opportunity for conversion to wildlife habitat or open-space recreation. This would substantially disrupt established manufacturing, business, and employment in the area. An evacuation of the area would pose inconvenience for many residents and patrons and economic hardships for some of the business owners and residents. The costs of permanent evacuation would be cost prohibitive for implementation.

(4) Flood Plain Regulations - This measure, in the form of zoning ordinances and regulations, is designed to discourage or prohibit flood damage prone construction in the flood plain. This plan is not viable in itself because it offers no prevention of pre-ordinance flood damages and effects, and because flood damage prone development is already established in the flood plain. Upon completion of a structural plan, the community will be required to update its flood plain regulations.

(5) Flood Insurance - This measure provides some financial protection to victims of flood-related property damage. Flood insurance, however, does not prevent flood losses; it merely compensates the victims.

Although nonstructural alternatives in themselves may not be practical and/or may not sufficiently satisfy the project area problems, they may be applied where practical with any structural alternative. Non-structural measures figure prominently in the No Action (Without Project Conditions) alternative and with National Flood Insurances policies. They may be included with other alternatives as more practical for isolated situations (i.e. flood proofing, evacuation, relocation).

## **6. PREFERRED PLAN**

The preferred plan(s) for the Blanchard River Watershed, which includes the City of Findlay and Village of Ottawa, has not yet been selected. Each measure and alternative will be evaluated for technical, economic, and environmental considerations and constraints.

## **7. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

Future conditions with the No-Action alternative and potential impacts with the proposed action and its alternatives will be assessed for the following social, economic, and environmental categories:

- Biological Resources
- Recreation
- Cultural Resources
- Socioeconomics
- Transportation
- Geology & Soils
- Water Resources
- Solid Waste Management
- Contaminated Materials
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Aesthetics
- Native American Tribes
- Environmental Justice

## 8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION PROGRAM

Throughout the scoping process, stakeholders and interested parties are invited to provide comment on the alternatives that will be evaluated in the Section 205 Feasibility Studies. An EA or EIS will address the potential social, economic and environmental benefits and adverse impacts that would result from each alternative plan selected for detailed analysis.

### Compliance with Environmental Protection Statutes:

a. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's "Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the NEPA of 1969" (40 CFR 1500-1508) and Engineer Regulation 200-2-2 (Procedures for Implementing NEPA), the USACE, Buffalo District will assess the potential significant environmental impacts of the eventual recommended plan in an EA or EIS.

b. Clean Water Act. If a plan is proposed for implementation that involves the placement of dredged or fill material below the ordinary high-water mark of any waters of the United States, the project will be evaluated in accordance with the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in conjunction with the Secretary of the Army under the authority of Section 404(b)(1) of the Act. A Section 404(a) Public Notice will be issued and any party that may be significantly impacted by the project will be afforded the opportunity to request a public hearing. Under Section 401 of the Act, USACE, Buffalo District will request certification from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) that the proposed project is in compliance with established effluent limitations and water quality standards.

Under Section 402 of the Act, if a recommended measure disturbs greater than one acre of ground surface, USACE, Buffalo District would develop a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan for the construction activity and submit the plan, along with a Notice of Intent application, to OEPA for coverage under their general permit.

c. Coastal Zone Management Act. The Corps of Engineers has reviewed the proposed project in accordance with the requirements of the State of Ohio Coastal Management Program (OCMP). The proposed project areas are located in Hancock and Putnam Counties. These counties are not located in Ohio's designated coastal management area. Therefore, in accordance with 15 CFR 930.38(a), the Buffalo District has determined that a State of Ohio Coastal Zone Consistency Determination is not required.

d. National Historic Preservation Act. Under Section 106 of this Act, this Scoping Information Packet also initiates consultation with the National Park Service, State Historic Preservation Office (Ohio Historical Society), potentially interested

Indian tribes, historic preservation organizations and others likely to have knowledge of, or concern with, historic properties that may be present within the area of potential effect.

e. Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and Endangered Species Act. Initial compliance with these acts is accomplished with this Scoping Information Packet. USFWS will provide a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report for consideration and inclusion with the EA or EIS. The report will include resource information, assessment/evaluation of impacts of detailed alternatives, endangered species consultation, and associated comments and recommendations.

f. Other Coordination Requirements. In addition to the aforementioned Federal statutes, the proposed project must also comply with other applicable or relevant and appropriate Federal laws. Table 1 presents a comprehensive list of environmental protection statutes, executive orders, etc. Therefore, an additional intent of this fact sheet is to disseminate pertinent project information to meet the applicable coordination/consultation requirements required under their provisions.

The purpose of the scoping process is to provide an opportunity for the public and government agencies to comment on and provide input to help identify issues related to the proposed Section 205 FDR studies to be addressed in the EA or EIS. If, after this evaluation and appropriate public review, it is concluded that the proposed project would have no significant environmental impacts and an EA or EIS is not required, the District Commander will sign a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a Record of Decision (ROD).

Comments and input about the issues and studies for the proposed project will be accepted 30 days from the date of this packet and should be sent to:

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Table 1. Federal Environmental Protection Laws, Orders, Policies.

**1. PUBLIC LAWS**

- (a) American Folklife Preservation Act, P.L. 94-201; 20 U.S.C. 2101, *et seq.*
- (b) Anadromous Fish Conservation Act, P.L. 89-304; 16 U.S.C. 757, *et seq.*
- (c) Antiquities Act of 1906, P.L. 59-209; 16 U.S.C. 431, *et seq.*
- (d) Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act, P.L. 93-291; 16 U.S.C. 469, *et seq.* (Also known as the Reservoir Salvage Act of 1960, as amended; P.L. 93-291, as amended; the Moss-Bennett Act; and the Preservation of Historic and Archaeological Data Act of 1974.)
- (e) Bald Eagle Act; 16 U.S.C. 668.
- (f) Clean Air Act, as amended; P.L. 91-604; 42 U.S.C. 1857h-7, *et seq.*
- (g) Clean Water Act, P.L. 92-500; 33 U.S.C. 1251, *et seq.* (Also known as the Federal Water Pollution Control Act; and P.L. 92-500, as amended.)
- (h) Coastal Barrier Resources Act of 1982, 16 U.S.C. § 3501 *et seq.*; 12 U.S.C. § 1441 *et seq.*
- (i) Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, P.L. 92-583; 16 U.S.C. 1451, *et seq.*
- (j) Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, P.L. 93-205; 16 U.S.C. 1531, *et seq.*
- (k) Estuary Protection Act, P.L. 90-454; 16 U.S.C. 1221, *et seq.*
- (l) Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act, P.L. 92-516; 7 U.S.C. 136.
- (m) Federal Water Project Recreation Act, as amended, P.L. 89-72; 16 U.S.C. 460-1(12), *et seq.*
- (n) Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958, as amended, P.L. 85-624; 16 U.S.C. 661, *et seq.*
- (o) Historic Sites Act of 1935, as amended, P.L. 74-292; 16 U.S.C. 461, *et seq.*
- (p) Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, P.L. 88-578; 16 U.S.C. 460/-460/-11, *et seq.*
- (q) Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1928; 16 U.S.C. 715.
- (r) Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918; 16 U.S.C. 703, *et seq.*
- (s) National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, P.L. 91-190; 42 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*
- (t) National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, P.L. 89-655; 16 U.S.C. 470a, *et seq.*
- (u) Native American Religious Freedom Act, P.L. 95-341; 42 U.S.C. 1996, *et seq.*
- (v) Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, P.L. 94-580; 7 U.S.C. 1010, *et seq.*
- (w) River and Harbor Act of 1899, 33 U.S.C. 403, *et seq.* (Also known as the Refuse Act of 1899.)
- (x) Submerged Lands Act of 1953, P.L. 82-3167; 43 U.S.C. 1301, *et seq.*
- (y) Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1977, P.L. 95-89; 30 U.S.C. 1201, *et seq.*
- (z) Toxic Substances Control Act, P.L. 94-469; 15 U.S.C. 2601, *et seq.*
- (aa) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, as amended, P.L. 83-566; 16 U.S.C. 1001, *et seq.*
- (bb) Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended, P.L. 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271, *et seq.*

**2. EXECUTIVE ORDERS**

- (a) Executive Order 11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment. May 13, 1979 (36 FR 8921; May 15, 1971).
- (b) Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management. May 24, 1977 (42 FR 26951; May 25, 1977).
- (c) Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands. May 24, 1977 (42 FR 26961; May 25, 1977).
- (d) Executive Order 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality, March 5, 1970, as amended by Executive Order, 11991, May 24, 1977.
- (e) Executive Order 12088, Federal Compliance with Pollution Control Standards, October 13, 1978.
- (f) Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, July 14, 1982.
- (g) Executive Order 12856, Federal Compliance with Right-to-Know Laws and Pollution Prevention Requirements, August 3, 1993.
- (h) Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, February 11, 1994.

**3. OTHER FEDERAL POLICIES**

- (a) Council on Environmental Quality Memorandum of August 11, 1980: Analysis of Impacts on Prime or Unique Agricultural Lands in Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act.
- (b) Council on Environmental Quality Memorandum of August 10, 1980: Interagency Consultation to Avoid or Mitigate Adverse Effects on Rivers in the National Inventory.
- (c) Migratory Bird Treaties and other international agreements listed in the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, Section 2(a)(4)