

## Article failed to answer key bypass questions

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We at the North Idaho Community Action Network would like to thank the Bee for their effort (12/2 "Dredging Plans...") to bring the community up to speed on the reasons why the Sand Creek highway project is delayed. We would also like to set the record straight on some issues raised in the article.

The Idaho Transportation Department must dredge a new channel in Sand Creek in order to avoid the erosion and creek bed instability that scientists say would result from filling the winter creek channel. The massive fill north of Bridge Street that ITD calls the "shoreline extension" will block the main creek channel. The fill is required to stabilize the 30-foot tall highway embankments and keep them (hopefully) from sinking into Sand Creek's goo.

On July 11, ITD was notified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that they were required to submit a revised application that included both the fill and dredging proposals and the extensive new information that has emerged during the last 1.5 years in response to the corps' requests for clarification and more information.

Thus ITD had 4 months (until Nov. 4th) to prepare the revised application. When that deadline was missed the corps graciously gave them a deadline extension until Dec. 8th. Based on ITD's statements in the article, it sounds like that deadline won't be met either. Why not?

ITD obviously didn't want to answer that question. Instead, the article states that Mr. Karsann's "nerves are jangled" about public perception if they "withdraw" the application in order to avoid being under a deadline. What are they hiding?

Why was the proposal to dredge not included in the original 2004 application for permits? Did they not foresee that filling the main channel might require dredging a new one? What about the petroleum contamination? Has ITD informed the public that it's been found where they propose to dredge and that dredging has the potential to send the pollution into Sand Creek, Lake Pend Oreille and the river? What is their plan to avoid extensive degradation of water quality as a result of this, the fills and other dredging that will be proposed?

These questions remain unanswered in spite of the fact that over 10 million taxpayer dollars have been spent on project design and planning (and large glossy illustrations).

And finally, this situation is not "alarming" to NICAN. In fact, it comes as no surprise that ITD does not have its "ducks in a row."

We have provided evidence again and again that ITD has failed to provide complete and accurate information regarding the potential pitfalls of constructing the Sand Creek highway -- to other agencies, to the public at large, and, most importantly, to this community.

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