

## **Dredging plans forcing more byway review**

*By KEITH KINNAIRD*

*News editor*

*12/02/05*

*Bonner County Daily Bee*

SANDPOINT -- The clock is ticking for the Idaho Transportation Department to either submit a revised permit application for the proposed Sand Creek Byway or temporarily withdraw it.

Plans to dredge the creek to make way for the controversial Highway 95 realignment project through Sandpoint are forcing planners provide additional information to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has put the permit in a holding pattern.

No dredging was planned when ITD submitted its permit request to the corps, but the agency has since advised the state that any work below the creek's high-water mark would constitute dredging. There is also talk of dredging the creek channel to compensate for a shoreline extension needed for recreation amenities and landscaping.

The state considered seeking a separate permit for the dredging, but the corps recommended the dredging component be folded into the existing permit so regulators have a global view of the project. The state was unable to meet a Nov. 4 deadline because including the new information is more than a matter of stapling it to the existing application, said Dave Karsann, ITD's District 1 senior environmental planner.

"It's just the mechanical configuration of blending them together to make them one and it's taking a little time," Karsann said.

The dredging aspect has also spurred additional review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, which is evaluating potential impacts to endangered bull trout and bald eagle. In addition, hydrocarbon contamination has been discovered in soils in Sand Creek, which is forcing yet more analysis.

The hydrocarbon contamination is believed to have come from leaky underground storage tanks for fuel.

Karsann said ITD is contemplating whether to seek a deadline extension from the corps or withdraw the permit so the new information can be melded into the application. Although Karsann sees little difference between the two options, the concept of withdrawal jangles his nerves because of the perception it could create in the community.

"The term 'withdrawal' has a negative tone to it," said Karsann.

The state also needs a permit from the Idaho Department of Lands. The IDL approved the permit, but hasn't issued it yet because there have been substantial changes to the project, which includes dredging and changes to the temporary work bridge.

Jim Brady, IDL's navigable waters manager, suspects ITD will have to submit the permit anew because of the changes.

"With the new information that's out there, I don't think there's anything out there they can do other than resubmit," said Brady.

The situation is alarming to the North Idaho Community Action Network, which steadfastly opposes a Sand Creek alignment because of environmental and aesthetic concerns. The group's executive director, Liz Sedler, said ITD should have had more foresight in planning the project and contends the permit delays exist because ITD has not given the corps enough information to work with.

"The bottom line is that ITD has not provided enough information," she said.