

Maintenance Eligibility Notes

by

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Home mortgage rates hit a 40-year low in 2003

Interest rates have continued to remain at historical lows throughout the year. The result was a continued boom in land development activities. Residential development has slowed somewhat in the southern tier of the Denver Metropolitan Area, but has strengthened in the northern tier. Commercial development has slowed in general, however, strong commercial growth is expected for the next several years along the north I-25 corridor. We processed 230 construction plan submittals this year, about the same as last year. Eighty of those reviews resulted in construction approval letters. Terri Fead, P.E. continued to help out with plan reviews through the first half of this year. She also helped out with FEMA LOMR and CLOMR reviews. Terri's involvement has been a tremendous benefit to the maintenance eligibility program.

The District's maintenance eligibility database, updated bi-monthly, and the *Guidelines for Maintenance Eligibility Of Flood Control Facilities Constructed By Others* (Maintenance Eligibility Guidelines) have been available online throughout the year. This has proved helpful to local governments and consulting engineers alike. Another effective tool has been the practice of holding project meetings involving District staff, design consultants and local government representatives as a way to reach consensus and move construction plans quickly through the final review process. We are also available by e-mail, fax or telephone to answer questions on design criteria or the maintenance eligibility program.

Projects being considered for the District's maintenance eligibility program may also trigger requirements under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Sometimes problems arise when a developer (permit applicant) satisfies Section 404 permit requirements, which may be in conflict with District requirements. In some instances,

Section 404 permits have already been issued when we first review construction documents. The Corps of Engineers Denver Regulatory Office staff and District staff believe that meeting the goals of the Section 404 permit program and the District's maintenance eligibility program are both integral to the success of development projects located adjacent to major drainageways. It is important to remember that the Denver Regulatory Office and the District have never failed to find consensus on development projects when early coordination and planning resulted in early agreement on concepts. The Compark project located along Happy Canyon Creek in Douglas County is an example of successful collaboration. The design and environmental consultants worked closely with the Denver Regulatory Office and District staff to craft a project that met all program requirements. The final design of Happy Canyon Creek through Compark represented cooperation and compromise between the Corps of Engineers and the District without conceding any basic design or environmental principals held by either agency.

An equally important consideration is remaining within permit requirements during construction. Developers, engineering consultants and contractors are all responsible for compliance with permit requirements. If in doubt, do not proceed with field changes without first verifying they are legal.

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In the field

An integral part of the maintenance eligibility process is construction oversight. Construction activity has increased this year over past years. At any given time, we typically have 120 to 150 active construction projects spread out over 1600 square miles in many different local jurisdictions. We heavily depend on networking and partnerships developed with local governments and various engineering consultants over the years to adequately cover construction oversight. In some cases, local government inspection staffs have conducted construction observations on the District's behalf. Field reports and/or digital photos are typically provided to us through e-mail. We also rely upon local inspection staff, engineering consultants and in some instances, contractors to keep us apprised of construction progress and the need for District construction site visits. During 2003, District staff completed nearly 100 construction site visits. Over 35 current projects were completed and recommended for construction acceptance during the preceding 12 months. Another 20 previously approved projects were re-inspected for adequate vegetative cover and received final approval.

District wins accounting award

For the fifteenth year in a row the District has received a "Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting" from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada.

The certificate is presented to government units whose comprehensive annual financial reports achieve the highest standards in government accounting and financial reporting. Congratulations to Frank Dobbins, Chief of Finance and Accounting, for continuing this string of awards.