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New Orleans District

News Release

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Applicant seeks major airport in Louisiana wetlands

Public meeting is Feb. 18 on proposed St. Charles International Airport

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has begun to consider a wetlands application to build a privately owned international airport that would involve 8,153 acres just west of New Orleans.

The applicant, St. Charles International Airport LLC of Houston, proposes a project in east St. Charles Parish. Its boundaries would be Louis Armstrong International Airport on the east and the Bonnet Carré Spillway on the west. The boundary on the south would be Airline Drive (U.S. 61) and on the north, Lake Pontchartrain.

The main airport facilities would be built in the wetlands immediately south of Interstate 10 and straddling Interstate 310.

Public meeting

A public meeting will be held Tuesday, February 18, at 7 p.m. in the Pontchartrain Center, 4545 Williams Blvd., Kenner, as one of the first steps in the environmental impact investigation.

This is known as a “scoping” meeting, where the public is invited to provide information to help the Corps of Engineers determine the fullest scope of issues to be considered in the environmental impact investigation.

An environmental impact statement is required as the Corps of Engineers has determined that the proposed project would “have significant impacts to resources of the United States.” Completion of the statement is currently estimated for 2006.

Airport plans

The project area involves 4,253 acres of swamp, marsh and emergent wetlands, and 3,900 acres of open water. Features would include five runways, 1½ to 2½ miles long; a

taxiway over I-310; an overpass to link I-10 with airport facilities; a passenger terminal; 11 miles of flood-protection levee; six miles of hurricane protection levee on the Lake Pontchartrain lakefront; and grade reduction for the Canadian National-Illinois Central railroad.

About 24 million cubic yards of organic material would be dredged out of the project area, and about 59 million cubic yards would be dredged from the Mississippi River, Bonnet Carré Spillway and commercial sources and deposited as fill. The airport's taxiway system would tie in with Louis Armstrong International.

Resource issues

The environmental impact statement will address these resource issues: impacts to wetlands, including bottomland hardwoods and wildlife; aquatic resources, including fisheries and essential fish habitat; coastal zone impacts; water quality; air quality; threatened and endangered species; recreation and cultural resources; aircraft and other noise; storm water runoff; transportation impacts, and homeland security. Alternative locations will be investigated that avoid impacts to wetlands.

Socioeconomic issues

Socioeconomic issues to be evaluated include need for project; flood protection; business and industrial activity; employment; land use; property values; public facilities and services; tax revenue; population; community and regional growth; transportation; housing, and community cohesion.

Questions

About the permit. Address questions to Project Manager Roger Swindler, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CEMVN-OD-SE, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans La. 70160. Telephone 504-862-2278. Fax 504-862-2117.

About the environmental impact statement. Address questions to Biologist Gib Owen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CEMVN-PM-RS, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, La. 70160-0267. Telephone 504-862-1337. Fax 504-862-2572.